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CHITRA-POTHI

Illustrated Palm-Leaf Manuscripts from Orissa

J.P. DAS

An important, but little known, art form of Orissa is the illustration on palm-leaf, which flourished with the Orissan tradition of copying *kavya* texts on palm-leaf manuscripts and illuminating them. This art form reached its zenith during the golden age of Oriya *kavya* literature in the eighteenth century when a large number of *chitra-pothis* (illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts) were done.

This book traces the palm-leaf tradition of Orissa and the development of Oriya literature which provided the basis of palm-leaf art. It discusses the making of the *chitra-pothi* and the texts illustrated and studies the patron, scribe and artist. The concluding chapters provide an analysis of the palm-leaf art: as illumination of the text and as an art form.

Rs. 200

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J.P. Das

Arnold-Heinemann

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Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar (OSM)
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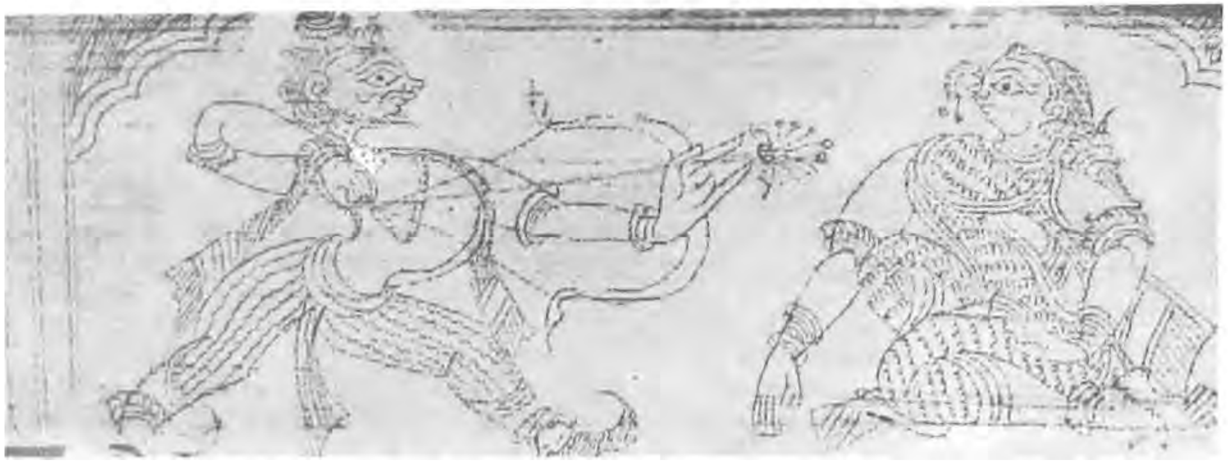
Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Udaypur, Puri (AS)
Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneshwar (OSA)
Utkal University Library, Bhubaneswar (UUL)
British Library, London (BL)
Museum Rietberg, Zurich (MR)
Vishwa Bharati, Santiniketan (VB)
New York Public Library (NPL)
Raghunandan Library, Puri (RL)
Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta (AM)
Private Collection (PC)

The abbreviations in brackets have been used in the captions to illustrations in this volume.

The photogrpahs of manuscripts from Raghunandan Library collection are by the Archaeological Survey of India.



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Ushabhilasha (OSM)

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INTRODUCTION

Durga in *Lavanyavati* (NM)

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The word *pothi* is a derivative from the Sanskrit *pustaka,* and denotes a pile of palm-leaves with writings on them, which is strung on a cord through pre-bored holes in the centre and protected by a pair of wooden covers at top and bottom of the pile. In Orissa, all writing was done on pothis till about the end of the nineteenth century and the State thus possessed a large number of such palm-leaf manuscripts. However, the extremely fragile nature of the material, aggravated by physical and climatic conditions and the lack of proper storage and preservation against heat, humidity and insects, has been responsible for the loss of the early pothis of Orissa. Added to this was a strange custom under which old pothis had to be written on new leaves and the old ones consigned to the river.

However, a large number of pothis can be found in the Orissa villages even today. Many families keep a collection of pothis near the house-hold deities and offer prayers to these, though they are never opened or read. In many villages, there are 'libraries' of pothis in community houses and religious texts are read from these pothis, morning and evening, as a daily ritual.

The great hoard of pothis came to the notice of English scholars almost immediately after the British occupation of Orissa in 1803. Andrew Stirling, the then Persian Secretary to Government, refers to his collection of pothis in 1804[1]. In 1859, Rev. J. Long published his 'Notes and queries suggested by a visit to Orissa in January 1859' in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in which he mentioned that Sanskrit

Swapnavichar (NPL)

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Jagannath Janana (OSM)

and Uriya manuscripts were available in Bhubaneswar and its suburbs and drew attention to them.[2] Colonel Mackenzi collected some pothis from Ganjam and Koraput Districts, and these were preserved in the Oriental Manuscripts Library in Madras.

John Beams, who was Collector, Balasore and later Commissioner, Orissa Division wrote an article on Oriya *kavya* 'Rasa Kallola' (*Indian Antiquary*, Vol.I, 1871), based on a palm-leaf manuscript, and this was the first publication to introduce the English readers to Oriya literature. A list of 107 Oriya writers and their works and of 47 manuscripts of undetermined authorship, prepared on the basis of palm-leaf manuscripts, was appended to Hunter's *Orissa* Vol.II published in 1872. Rajendra Lal Mitra published "Notices of Manuscripts preserved in the Asiatic Society, Bengal before 1898 A.D.", in which he referred to many manuscripts collected from Orissa. As a matter of fact, both Hunter and Mitra sought to write the history of Orissa on the basis of a palm-leaf manuscript from the Jagannath temple in Puri, the *Madala Panji*. M.M.Chakravarty also collected a number of pothis and his study of these manuscripts was published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* in 1897-98 under the title 'Notes on the Language and Literature of Orissa.'

The search for Oriya pothis continued and Haraprasad Shastri wrote in 1915, "In the District of Puri, there are 32 *sasanas* or villages granted to Brahmins in perpetuity by the Hindu Rajas of Orissa. In 1908 I went there with Prof. MacDonell and we

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calculated that the number of palm-leaf manuscripts (for all Orissa manuscripts are written on palm-leaf with a style) in these sasanas is nearly two lakhs. The Gopavardhana Matha alone contains more than two thousand manuscripts."[3]

Systematic attempts were made for collection of these manuscripts with the establishment of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society. After the creation of the separate province of Orissa, a number of pandits were engaged for search of manuscripts in the different parts of Orissa and the adjoining feudatory States. They noticed nearly fifteen thousand manuscripts out of which notices of about twelve thousand manuscripts are preserved in the manuscripts gallery of the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar.[4]

Collection of manuscripts was one of the important activities of the Ravenshaw College Museum at Cuttack (established in 1932), which was later converted into the Orissa Provincial Museum and later called the Orissa State Museum. Prachi Samiti of Cuttack, Baripada Museum of Mayurbhanj and Raghunandan Library of Puri also made valuable collection of pothis. In 1950, a separate section for manuscripts was opened in the Orissa State Museum, which is now the largest repository of Oriya pothis. The other good collections of Oriya pothis are in the Utkal University Library, Bhubaneswar, Oriya Department of Vishwa Bharati, Shantiniketan, Berhampur University Library, Berhampur and the Aurobindo Sangrahalay, Udaypur.

Kripasindhu Janana (AS)

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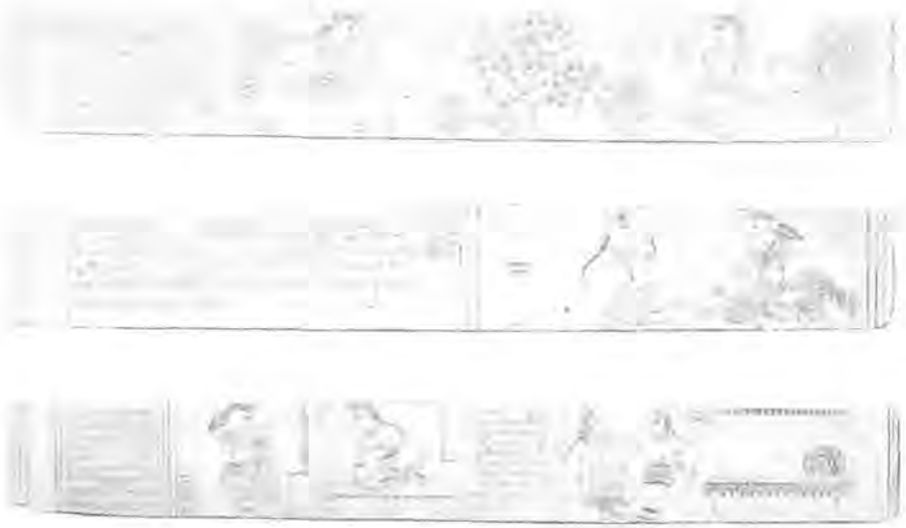
Though we find a large number of palm-leaf manuscripts in Orissa, both in institutions and in private collections, the number of chitra-pothis or pothis with illustrations is not very large. It is only certain types of manuscripts (mostly *kavyas*) which were being illustrated. While ordinary pothis were of interest to Oriya readers and museums in Orissa, chitra-pothis, because of their artistic value, were sought after by collectors and museums outside Orissa too. It is thus that many museums in India have some chitra-pothis from Orissa in their collection, and the National Museum, New Delhi has a very good and representative collection of such pothis. Many chitra-pothis have found their way to museums and collectors abroad. The chitra-pothis are thus scattered and access to private collections is difficult. In Orissa, chitra-pothis lie buried among other pothis in village community sheds and family hoards. Besides, chitra-pothis have been split up and pages from the same manuscript are to be seen at different places in India and abroad. Many of the illustrations are also moth-eaten and damaged and it is rare to come across a complete chitra-pothi in good condition.

Hunter was the first to bring the illustrations of the Oriya chitra-pothi to public notice when he reproduced 'Three pages of an Illustrated palm-leaf Book in the Uriya Character' in his *Orissa* in 1872. These pages were from a *Gita Govinda* in his personal collection. In R.D. Banerjee's *History of Orissa* (1930), a colour reproduction of 'Battle scene with Ravana from an old palm-leaf Ramayana ms.,



From Hunter's *Orissa*

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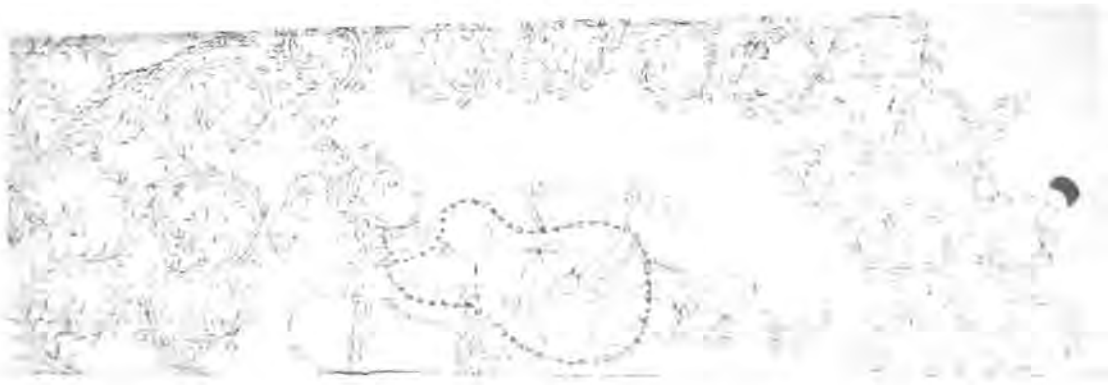
Orissa' had been given in the frontispiece. A study of the art of the chitra-pothi was made for the first time by O.C.Gangoli when he wrote about an illustrated manuscript of *Bhagavata* from Orissa in 1938.[5] It was, however, Stella Kramrisch's article on the illustrtated *Amarushataka* in the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* in 1940 which drew attention to a new style of miniature art of India. She had mentioned the palm-leaf illustration in R.D.Banerjee's book and had added that few illustrated manuscripts or incised palm leaves from Orissa were known.[6] It was only in 1952 that O.C.Gangoli published the complete text of a chitra-pothi *Dasapoi,* with reproductions of the illustrations.

However, even after this date, not much work has been done on chitra-pothis from Orissa. In the collection of various Museums, we now have a good number of chitra-pothis available for study. Jeremiah P.Losty's *Krishna, a Hindu Vision of God,* published in 1980, makes a study of the three 'most beautiful' illustrated Oriya palm-leaf manuscripts out of a dozen in the British Library collection. A large number of chitra-pothis are no doubt lost and the ones now available represent only a small fraction of illustrated manuscripts that were executed. However, the availability of chitra-pothis must be considered significant, when compared to the almost complete absence of any old miniature paintings on cloth from Orissa.

Orissa has had its own school of miniature painting in the traditional pata-chitra, made by the Chitrakar caste of people. These paintings were all on

Dasapoi (NM)



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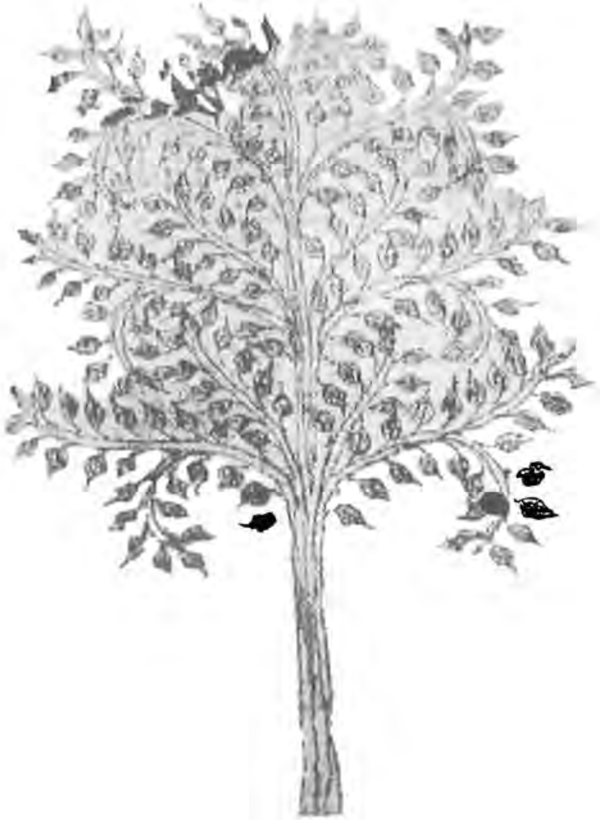

Vaidehisha Vilasa (PC)

religious subjects and were mainly done for use in rituals and sale to pilgrims. The new school of palm-leaf illustrations which flourished in the golden age of mediaeval Oriya literature was, however, secular in character and the artists of this school were not drawn from a particular caste. Though having many similarities with the pata-chitra, the palm-leaf art developed its own rules and conventions and stood out as a distinct school. Orissan palm-leaf art is also different from the Nepalese, Pala and Jain miniature paintings on palm-leaf and thus deserves special study. This book seeks to provide an introduction to the chitra-pothi against the background of Orissa's palm-leaf tradition. One looks forward to the publication of Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan's specialised work on *Gita Govinda* and Prof. Joanna Williams' work on *Ramayana* in palm-leaf manuscript illustrations of Orissa.

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PART I

THE TRADITION

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Palm tree in *Sarvanga Sundari* (OSM)

I. THE PALM-LEAF TRADITION

Palm (*tala* in Sanskrit and Oriya) is a sacred tree in India and the fruit of the palm tree is used in offerings to deities. In the Parasurameshwar temple in Bhubaneswar (7th century AD), there is a sculpture of a devotee making an offering of a palm fruit. Palm has been treated as sacred in Buddhist literature too. A passage in *Lalita Vistara* says, "Just as the exocarp of the ripe fruit of the tala palm, when it drops from its stalk, is of a bright yellow, even so is the face of the Blessed Gautama perfectly pure".

The use of palm-leaf for writing has a long tradition in India. Hiuen-Tsang who visited India during 629-645 AD referred to the Indian use of palm-leaf for writing purposes. About 1030 AD, Alberuni saw the use of palm-leaf and his narrative says: "The Hindus have in the south of their country a slender tree like the date and cocoanut palms, bearing edible fruits and leaves of the length of one yard, and as broad as three fingers one put beside the other. They call these *tari* and write on them. They bind a book of these leaves together by a cord on which they are arranged, the cord going through all the leaves by a hole in the middle of each."

Parasurameshwar sculpture

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Pothi in Konarka sculpture (NM)

The earliest evidence of a book written in Orissa is at the end of the eighth century, in 795 AD, when the Chinese emperor Te-tsong received as a token of homage an autographed manuscript of *Avatamsaka-sutra* addressed to him by king Subhakara of Wu-cha (Orissa)[1].

Old palm-leaf manuscripts are hard to come by due to the perishable nature of the leaves. Writing about old manuscripts, Hoernle had wirtten in 1900 that he had not met with any Oriya palm-leaf manuscript of an earlier date than the 24th year of Mukunda Deva or AD 1683, and that so far as this evidence went, it showed that Oriya palm-leaf manuscripts were not older than the second half of the 17th century[2]. Hoernle's conclusion was, however, based on a study of a few manuscripts. The oldest datable palm-leaf manuscript now extant is stated to be a copy of *Abhinava Gita Govinda* by Gajapati Purushottama Deva now in the Orissa State Museum, which is said to have been copied on April 6, 1494 AD[3]. It is difficult to accept this date for the extant copy without further scrutiny, for it is quite possible that the manuscript now in the Orissa State Museum is a copy of an earlier manuscript written in 1494 AD, since the scribes often copied the original colophons, including dates, onto new manuscripts. It, however, proves that a copy of *Abhinava Gita Govinda* had been made in 1494.

Epigraphic evidence of the use of palm-leaf for writing in Orissa goes back much further, to the sixth century AD. The Kurud charter of Maharaja Narendra issued from his camp of victory at

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Tilakeswara records the renewal of the grant of the village Kesavaka. This village had been formerly granted in a palm-leaf charter to one Bhasrutaswami by the previous king, but as the palm-leaf was destroyed in fire, Maharaja Narendra regranted it in a copper plate charter in favour of Sankhaswami, son of Bhasrutaswami. Maharaja Narendra was a Sarabhapuriya king of South Kosaḷa in the 6th century AD.[4]

A copper plate inscription of the Shailodbhava dynasty (7th—8th centuries AD) is also considered as having been copied from a palm-leaf since some later portions of the charter have been inscribed above earlier portions. S.N. Rajguru explains the mistake as follows: "It is a grave mistake on the part of the engraver. What caused him to commit such a blunder? I imagine that he was asked to copy the *prasasti* of the grant from a record previously written on some palm-leaves which were not properly arranged or that the contents of a leaf which was wrongly placed and copied by the engraver who neither knew the language nor the subject-matter written on it. He blindly copied out one leaf after the other. So, the misplaced leaf was written by him in between the lines 10 to 13 of the text."[5]

These instances would show that charters were first copied on palm-leaf and later engraved on metal by a coppersmith or engraver. It is interesting to note that many of the copper plates were made in the shape and size of palm leaves. The text was engraved parallel to the long side as on a palm-leaf and several plates strung together through a hole on a ring which

Copper plate c. 6th century AD (OSM)

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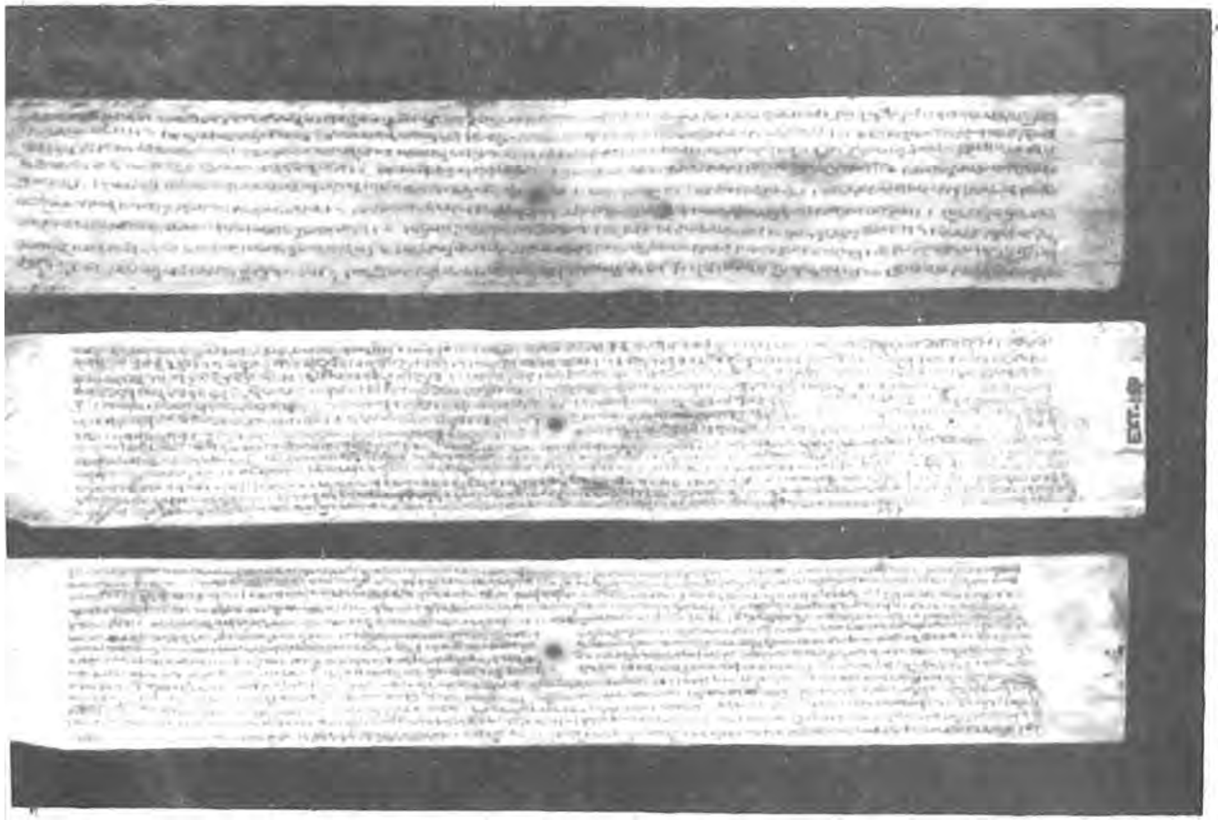
Mukteshwar sculpture

Haripur sculpture



Gita Govinda on ivory (OSM)

often bore the royal seal. (Many paper manuscripts of a later date were also made in the palm-leaf format. In the Orissa State Museum, there is a *Gita Govinda* manuscript written on thin ivory plates resembling palm-leaves.)

Palm-leaf pothis can be seen portrayed in many Orissan sculptures too. A panel under a ninth century Buddha statue, now in a temple in Haripur, has the figure of a scholar sitting in front of a *vyasasana* (folding book-stand) on which two pothis are kept. Pictures of such book stands with scholars sitting in front of them can be seen in sculptures in Mukteshwar temple (10th century AD). In the Konarka temple (13th century AD), there are sculptures showing king Narasimha, the builder of the temple, with a pothi in his hand.

Writing on palm-leaf has many ritual uses in Orissa. On Raksha Panchami day (fifth day of the dark fortnight of Bhadra month), painting of Batuka Bhairava (an aspect of Shiva) is done on doors and a palm-leaf is hung on the door with an invocation to Shiva written on it. In the Jagannath temple in Puri, a letter is written on palm-leaf on behalf of Rukmini to be delivered to Jagannath. In the Mahabharat story, Rukmini who was being married off to Sisupala, had written a letter to Krishna who had come and taken her away to Dwaraka and married her there. On the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of Jyestha month (also known as Rukmini Harana or kidnapping of Rukmini day), this story is enacted in the Puri temple. A temple functionary writes the letter on palm-leaf in the Lakshmi shrine, and the letter is carried by a Brahmin messenger to Jagannath (Krishna).

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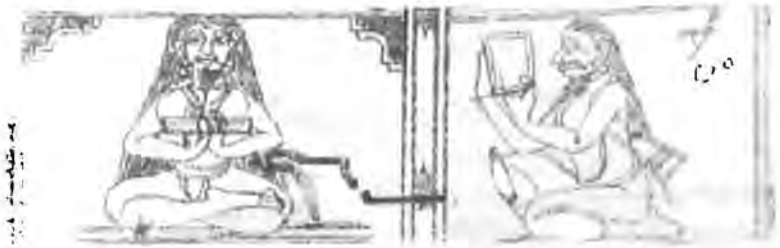
In Orissa, horoscopes are also traditionally written on palm-leaf. A caste of people in Orissa called Nahakas are professional horoscope makers who use palm-leaf and iron styles to cast the horoscope of new born infants. They are sent for immediately after a child is born and a horoscope is a proud possession of the Oriya household.

Though paper came to general use in India in the 13th century it was introduced in Orissa only after the Muslim conquest of Orissa in 1568 AD. However, even after this date, palm-leaf continued as the main writing material, not only for literary and religious texts, but also for documents and deeds. Many of the land grants and leases and promisory notes were written on palm-leaf and authenticated by revenue officials. That both palm-leaf and paper were used for writing even in the 18th and 19th centuries is evident from literary references of the period. In an early 18th century *kavya*, the beloved separated from her lover did not receive any letter from him for a year and reproaches him: 'Is paper so scarce there? Are all the palm trees burnt down?'[6] In a fiction of late 18th century, the prince writes a letter with a thorn on a screw-pine leaf since he could not find stylus and palm-leaf; the princess, however, writes her reply with pen and paper.[7]

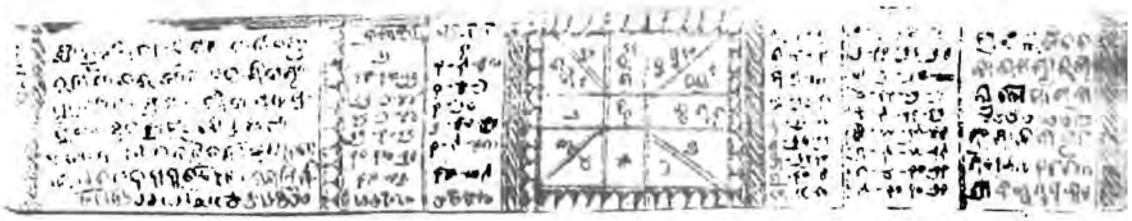
When the British came to Orissa early in the 19th century, the position was still the same and the Oriyas had not switched over from palm-leaf to paper. This is how Toynbee, the Canal Revenue Superintendent of Cuttack describes the situation in 1873:[8]

"When we first acquired it in 1803 there was

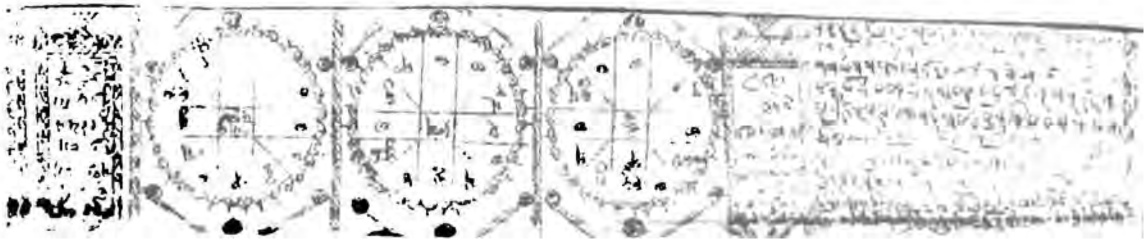


Vaidehisha Vilasa (PC)

Konarka sculpture (NM)



Horoscopes from Orissa



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hardly a single native of Orissa in Government employ. The language of the courts and public offices was Persian and it was not until 1805 that the Commissioners directed that in all written communications with the natives of the province, the subject should be written in Uriya as well as in Persian. This order necessitated the employment of Uriya *mohurirs*, who though skilful enough with their iron pen and bundle of palm leaves, were almost helpless when required to write on paper with an ordinary pen."

Even till recently writing religious texts on palm-leaf was considered an act of piety. Many of the religious texts were printed on paper towards the end of the nineteenth century, but even so, scribes continued to write them on the palm-leaf. Mayadhar Mansinha (1905-1973) in his *History of Oriya Literature*, gives the following instance of his personal experience.[9] "I remember an honest hard working peasant of my village in my childhood days, who for years spent his middays in silent, painstaking labour, transcribing only one book, the *Bhagavata* of Jagannatha Das, the guiding star of his whole religious life. At that time printed sets of Jagannatha's *Bhagavata* were already available in the market, and, I suppose, had already made their appearance in the village. But to that innocent peasant the printed paper was still vulgar, lacking the aroma of sanctity attached to palm leaves."

Another true story of about the same period (beginning of the twentieth century) is still more interesting. A school had been opened in a Brahmin

Prince with sheet of paper, *Lavanyavati* (NM)

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village in Puri, after some effort by the Joint Inspector of Schools. In this school the children were made to write on paper instead of palm-leaf. The Brahmins found this highly objectionable and forced the closure of the school for this reason. The children had to go through a purification ceremony with shaving of the head and taking cow-dung water.[10]

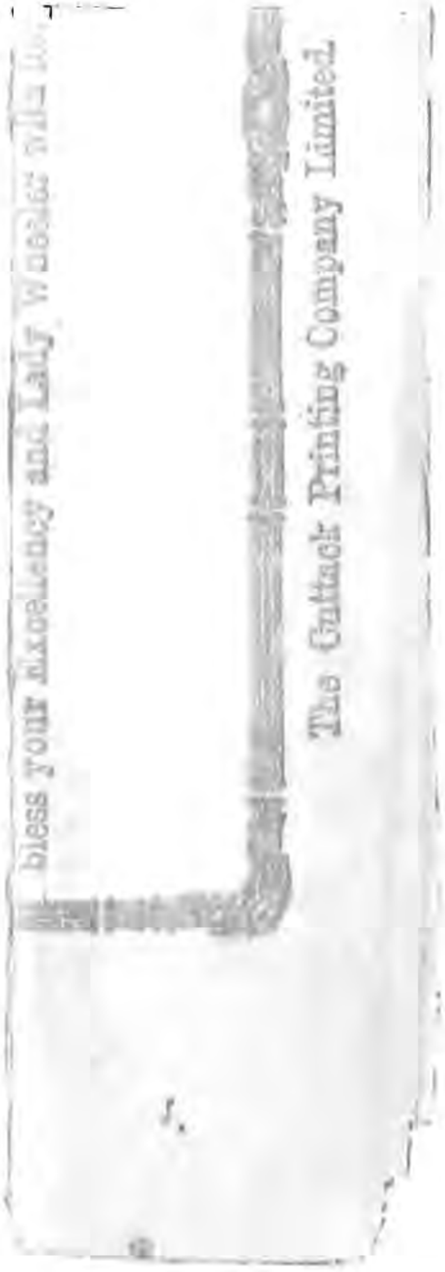
Even after the availability of printed books, scribes continued to copy texts on the palm-leaf, sometimes using the printed book to copy from. There are instances of printed books being copied onto the palm-leaf. The colophons of two such *chitra-pothis* read as follows:

'Here is copied *Sri Balahaka Chautisa*, written by Sri Sri Maharajkumar Sri Brajraj Singhdeo, Yuvaraj of Khariar. Printed for the first time in the press of Cuttack Printing Company in 1886. Corrected by Sri Secretary Gauri Shankar Ray.' (Manuscript No.80. 1505 in the National Museum).

'Dasapoi, a charming poem concerning the story of Sri Radha and Krishna, written by Yuvaraja Bhanja or the renowned poet Upendra Bhanja is published in a second edition by the Arunodaya Printing Press, corrected by Sri Bhagirathi Sathia.' (Manuscript No.62. 2598 in the National Museum).

The second manuscript was copied and illustrated by Sarathi Madala Patnaik in 1907.

Palm-leaf was considered so sacred that even after printing presses came to Orissa, important texts got printed on palm-leaf instead of paper. In 1925, when a memorandum containing the demands of Oriyas was to be submitted to Sir Henry Wheeler, the



Memorandum on Palm-leaf (AS)

Court document on palm-leaf (OSA)

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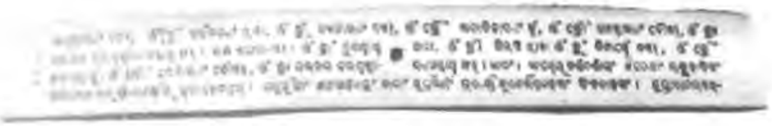

Saptashati Chandi (OSM)

Lavanyavati (NM)

then Governor of Bihar and Orissa, the Oriya People's Association got it printed on palm-leaves. The Raksha Panchami invocation mentioned earlier is sometimes printed on palm-leaves nowadays as are tantrik and religious texts. It is not unusual in Orissa to get New Year's greeting cards and wedding invitations printed on palm-leaves. Religious texts are still read out from palm-leaf manuscripts rather than from printed books. Attempt has also been made in recent years to revive the palm-leaf art through teaching in Government crafts schools.

A modern Oriya poet, Chintamani Mohanty (1867-1943), sings the following paean of praise in his Ode to the Palm-leaf:

> You are priceless
> A leaf of gold is no match for you
> Words cannot recount your greatness.
>
> In Orissa you are ever worshipped
> As the root of knowledge and wisdom
> Your flag keeps flying in Orissa.
>
> Whether it is literature or arithmatic
> Or history or folk-lore
> You are the repository of all arts.
>
> Other leaves are legion
> And are trampled under the foot
> But you are worshipped like a god.
>
> Paper now competes with you
> But in Orissa
> You are forever undaunted.

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2. SCRIPT, LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE OF ORISSA

The earliest script found in Orissa is the Brahmi script in which the Ashokan inscriptions of Dhauli and Jaugada were written in the third century BC. The language of the script was a form of a middle Indo-Aryan language, as opposed to Sanskrit. In Kharavela's inscription in Khandagiri-Udayagiri (first century AD) a slightly different Brahmi script was used and the language was akin to Pali. From the Gupta period onwards, the language followed in the copper plates and stone inscriptions was Sanskrit. The script from the 5th to the 8th century AD developed what has been called box-head characters. After this date, there were regional variations in the script and the script used in South Orissa (called the later Kalinga script) was influenced by South Indian scripts.

The next stage of development was the proto-Oriya (called proto-Bengali by Buhler) which was used from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries in Assam, Bengal and Orissa. It is from this script that modern Oriya (as also modern Bengali) script evolved. Whereas the Bengali script retained the horizontal top line of the original script, it is said that

Prince with palm-leaf & lekhani in *Lavanyavati* (NM)

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Vyasa in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

Oriya script changed them to curves due to the exigencies of the writing material, the palm-leaf. The incision of a long, straight, horizontal line with an iron stylus would have split the leaf, because palm has a longitudinal fibre going from the stalk to the point. Moreover, the style being held in the right hand and the leaf in the left, the thumb of the left hand serves as a fulcrum on which the style moves and this naturally imparts a circular form to the letters.[1] The palm-leaf is thus said to have decided the shape of the Oriya script.

The main development of the Oriya script took place during the rule of the kings of the Ganga dynasty in Orissa from 1077 to 1435 AD as evidenced from numerous copper plate grants and stone inscriptions of this period. The stone inscription found in the Pottesvar temple in Ganjam of the year 1370 AD is considered to be the earliest Oriya inscription in cursive Oriya script.[2]

The copper plate grants and stone inscriptions were all written in the Sanskrit language though Oriya words were sometimes used. The first use of Oriya language in a grant was by Narasimha Deva IV in his Kenduli copper plate grant of 1383 AD.[3] It was also during his time that Oriya was introduced as the language for court documents. By the time of the Suryavamshi kings of Orissa (1435-1540 AD), Oriya script and language had fully developed. This period also marked the beginning of Oriya literature. The earliest datable work in Oriya literature is the *Mahabharat* of Sarala Das, who mentions that he was a contemporary of the first Suryavamshi king Kapilendra (1435-1467).

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The Charya songs composed in a period between the ninth to the twelfth centuries AD by composers hailing from the eastern region of India are stated to be the oldest Oriya literary works. The palm-leaf manuscript of *Charyagiti* was discovered by Haraprasad Shastri in Nepal in 1907 and was published by him in Bengali in 1916. The manuscript, now preserved in the National Archives of Nepal, seems to have been copied in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century and is in a script which was in vogue in Bengali-Assamese and Maithili of that period. So far as the language is concerned, this earliest vernacular text has been claimed by Bengali, Assamese, Maithili and Oriya. The language perhaps 'represents a stage of speech which is very much akin to what we would conceive to be old Oriya or old Assamese as much as old Bengali.'[4]

Between the Charya songs and Sarala Das's *Mahabharat,* no Oriya literary works have come to notice except some prose writings and a poem called *Kalasa Chautisa.* During this period, however, Orissa produced an enormous amount of Sanskrit literature, which include books on astrology, astronomy, medicine, grammar, religion and law. Several commentaries were written on well-known Sanskrit works. There was also an outpouring of literary works, the best-known of which are *Anargha Raghava* of Murari Misra, *Gita Govinda* of Jayadeva and *Sahitya Darpana* of Vishwanath Kaviraj.

There are many legends concerning Sarala Das. It is said that he was considered the dunce of the family which belonged to the cultivator caste.

Balaram Das in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

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Valmiki in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

Through the grace of the goddess of his village, Sarala acquired the power of versifying. The goddess ordered him to compose the *Mahabharat* in Oriya and when he expressed his inability to distinguish good from bad verses, she told him, "Write on palm-leaves whatever comes to your mind. When you get disgusted, take the palm-leaves so written to the river Chandrabhaga and float them in its water. Gather those leaves which will float upto you and stitch them according to the order of receipt. This will be your *Mahabharat*". In this way, Sarala Das is said to have composed his work.[5]

By the time of Sarala Das, Oriya script, language and literature had come to a fully developed stage. (Sarala writes in his *Mahabharat* that Krishna had studied Oriya among other languages). *Mahabharat* of Sarala Das was written in spoken Oriya at a time when Sanskrit held its sway as the language of the court and literature. Sarala wrote the epic in his own style, taking only the bare minimum from the original Sanskrit work of Vyasa. He also gave the characters and the episodes Orissan colour and it is no wonder that his *Mahabharat* became one of the most popular books in Orissa. Sarala Das acquired celebrity in Bengal too and his *Mahabharat* was introduced in a Bengali translation not later than the early part of the sixteenth century.[6]

Soon after, two other epics, Valmiki's *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavata Purana* were rendered into Oriya. Like Sarala's *Mahabharat,* Balaram Das's *Jagamohan Ramayana* and Jagannath Das's *Bhagavata* deviated a great deal from the original Sanskrit. There is so much originality and local colour in these writings that the

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Oriya epics have been called original works of the authors rather than translations.[7] These three books soon became the most widely read books in Orissa.

With the advent of Chaitanya to Orissa in 1510 AD and the spread of Vaishnavism, the Oriya *Bhagavata* was, however, soon to achieve unprecedented popularity. Community houses called Bhagavata-ghars sprang up in the villages of Orissa where copies of *Bhagavata* were kept and daily recited. When the common people found that the *Bhagavata*, the most sacred of sacred books was within their easy reach, they took to the study of Oriya with uncommon zeal[8]. Parents wanted their children to learn *Bhagavata* so that they could read it to them on their deathbed. In case of an epidemic or calamity, the villagers took recourse to reading the *Bhagavata*. It became the most quoted book and lines from *Bhagavata* entered the everyday speech of Oriyas. The book in a way permeated the entire social life of Orissa. This is what was written about the position of *Bhagavata* a hundred years back and the position has not changed much in the villages of Orissa today.

'The *Bhagavata Purana* is the most sacred book of the Vaishnavas, their Bible or Koran. The Oriyas are mostly Vaishnavas, and hence the Oriya *Bhagavata* enjoys an immense popularity. In every respectable house, a room is set apart in which the *Bhagavata* with the other religious works is kept on a gadi (raised seat) and periodically or daily worshipped with flowers, tulsi leaves and sandal pastes. In every important village a shed is set aside at one end, where the villagers gather and hear every week the *Bhagavata*

Jagannath Das in *Tika Bhagavata* (OSA)

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Bhagavata-ghar, Puri District

read out by Brahmins. On auspicious days the *Bhagavata* is read out in a gentleman's house to his friends and relatives, while the pothi is always handled with care and respect.'[9]

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a large number of *kavyas* or long episodical poems were written in Oriya, all based on the Krishna theme. The most outstanding of these *kavyas* are Bhakta Charan Das's *Mathura Mangala* and Dinakrishna Das's *Rasakallola*. Several other translations of *Ramayana* also appeared, the more popular ones being the versions of *Adhyatma Ramayana* by Gopal Telenga and Haladhar Das and *Vichitra Ramayana* by Vishwanath Khuntia. Another popular book of the period was Shishu Shankar Das's *Ushabhilasha*, based on a story in Sarala's *Mahabharat*. New poetic forms also emerged during this period, viz, Janana (songs of prayer), Chautisa (songs which followed the chautis or thirtyfour consonants of the Oriya alphabet) and Poi (referring to the number of verses in the poem, Dasa-poi meaning a ten-verse poem).

Whereas the early Oriya literature was written for the masses in a simple diction, which was at once naive, vigorous and spontaneous, the *kavya* literature of the later period followed a chaste, ornamental and Sanskritised language. The *kavya* poets tried to make up for the loss of the natural gusto, forthright clarity and strength of common man's speech in the early writing by metrical and dictional cleverness. In *kavyas* like *Ushabhilasha*, we meet only the beginnings of this. Later it was to be the sole objective of the poets.[10]

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Orissa lost her independence in 1568 AD and was successively overrun by Afghans, Mughals and Marathas. Till the British conquest in 1803, Orissa was a veritable cockpit of rival warlords and marauders and there was no peace and security. In the absence of a stable central power, Orissa broke up into a number of semi-independent principalities under local rajas. These small feudal chiefs warred among themselves, maintained harems and patronised art, music and literature for a pastime. Their courts became the refuge of pandits and pedants who believed in ornamental poetry and writings which were alliterative, full of puns and yielded different interpretations in the hands of the learned. The outstanding literary figure of the period, when poetry moved to the court, was Upendra Bhanja, himself a prince.

Dhananjay Bhanja, raja of Ghumsar from 1640 to 1701 was an important poet who wrote several *kavyas*. He also married several wives who had numerous children and when he was old, the queens and their sons quarrelled among themselves. The favourite queen wanted her son Nilakanth to succeed and so she poisoned her husband. Nilakanth could, however, ascend the throne only after murdering his elder brother and the latter's son. Nilakanth himself was deposed after two years and had to leave the State.

Upendra Bhanja, the eldest son of Nilakanth preferred to keep away from the family feud and to devote himself to writing poetry. The quantity he has written is enormous and some of his works are yet to be

Ushabhilasha (AS)

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Upendra before Narayana in *Lavanyavati* (NM)

published in print. He was the master of ornate poetry and each of his works is an example of his mastery over some particular versifying skill or other. Through clever manipulation of words and with a liberal use of puns, alliterations, assonances and figures of speech, he built up a body of poetry which was gaudy and grandiloquent and at the same time pedantic and unintelligible. He composed songs, *kavyas*, epics, fictional poems, rhetorical compositions, *chitra-kavya* (picture-poems) and even a dictionary in verse for the use of poets. He wrote whole books of verse in which each line started with the same letter of the alphabet. He has entire cantos which, if the first letter of each line is taken out, read in a different metre and give a different meaning. He has a whole canto which reads the same backwards making it a long palindrome of five hundred and sixty letters. He is also as much known for explicit descriptions of sex as for his verbal jugglery. And it is Upendra again who, for the first time, liberated Oriya literature from religion and wrote true secular poetry. 'To summarise, Upendra Bhanja is in Oriya language the most voluminous author, the earliest and most prominent fictional poet, the most obscene, the most unintelligible, and on the whole the best writer of rhetorical excellences.'[11]

Till the Oriya literature entered the truly modern phase in the second half of the nineteenth century, all the poets who came after Upendra blindly followed him and wrote in his style. During this period, music and dance flourished under the encouragement of the princely courts. It was also the age

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of copying of thousands of palm-leaf manuscripts for large scale circulation. Numerous chitra-pothis were prepared under court patronage and most of the illustrated manuscripts would belong to this period, though many of the extant chitra-pothis seem to have been done towards the later part of the nineteenth century.

Though paper was in use during Upendra's time, poets did their writing on palm-leaf, as this was considered sacred and proper. Upendra sometimes had his hero and heroine write love letters with pen and paper, though he himself most probably used palm-leaves to compose on. It was through palm-leaf copies of manuscripts that a poet reached his large readership. In the case of Upendra himself, more than a hundred years had to lapse after his death for any of his books to come out in print.

Through all these developments in literature, the Oriya script used in pothis did not udergo much of a change from its fifteenth century form. However, with the introduction of paper and the growing use of Oriya in court work, a new cursive script emerged to enable faster writing. The new script was called Karani, after Karan, the caste of the scribes, and was used for writing on paper with pen and ink. Palm-leaf manuscripts, however, continued to be written in the old form of script (sometimes called Brahmani to distinguish it from Karani), though some court documents on palm-leaf were written in Karani. As a matter of fact, there was an injunction that Karani script should not be used in a pothi, and that the writing should be done in a neat manner.[12]

Kamsa writing in *Mathura Mangala* (AS)

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Upendra in *Premasudhanidhi* (NM)

In 1872, John Beams, Commissioner, Orissa Division, had thought that karani had come to stay and had written, '... with the greater extension of the use of paper, which has taken place since the establishment of our rule, especially in our courts of justice, the round top line of the Oriya script is gradually dying out, and many contractions have been introduced, which it is to be hoped may be by degrees imported into the printed character.'[13] But this did not happen and the Oriya script of today (both hand-written and printed) is no different from the script used in palm-leaves.

Oriya-printing was introduced by Missionaries soon after the British conquest of 1803. An Oriya type-face was devised in 1804[14] by the Serampore Press of the Missionaries and the first Oriya book came out of the press three years later. The type-face followed the script of the palm-leaf manuscripts rather than the Karani script used in the courts. The first press to come up with local efforts was Cuttack Printing Company which published the Oriya periodical *Utkal Dipika*. It started printing in the lithographic process in 1866 but soon acquired Oriya types which again were in the script of the palm-leaf. The first book to be printed in this press was Upendra Bhanja's *Premasudhanidhi* which was released on the 15th December 1866.[15] The promoters of the Press also formed a literary society for the promotion of Oriya and one of their earliest decisions was to publish Oriya *kavyas* in print. The first books chosen for such printing included Upendra Bhanja's *Vaidehisha Vilasa* and Dinakrishna Das's *Rasakallola*.[16]

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3. PATRON, SCRIBE, ARTIST

Though a pothi was sometimes written by a person for his own use, it was the professional scribe who usually wrote the manuscripts for patrons. The colophon of a pothi reads as follows:

'The writing was completed in the year 1238 (1831 AD) on the second day of Shravana month at one in the afternoon on Tuesday. The scribe is Aparti Mohanty of Kelupada who wrote it as per the order of Vaishnav Das. Having completed the book Mohanty took it to Das, who was happy to see it.' (Orissa State Museum, Manuscript No. OL.1711)

Sometimes the scribe physically sat on the verandah of the patron and wrote the book. 'The scribe Keli Krishna Das of village Tandara of Orissa in Cuttack district wrote this book on the verandah of Sri Lakshmi Nayaran Kanungo, who bought the book.' (OL.1858). If he had literary proclivities, the scribe described his sale of the book to the patron with euphemisms: 'The most revered, foremost among the learned, repository of all qualities, respectable, Sir. This humble scribe, having written *Navaratna Gita* on palm-leaf with a stylus, offers it to the lotus palms of your honour and would consider his labours worth while if this is accepted.' (OL.1934)

King Narasimha as patron of arts, Konarka sculpture (NM)

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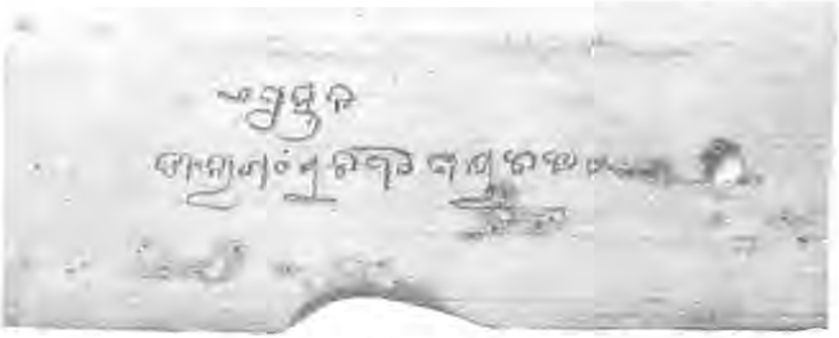
In a rare case, the price was mentioned. A manuscript (OL.1640) was given in exchange for a window frame. Another (OL.1697) was sold 'for a proper price' and a third (OL.2146) was priced at a rupee and a quarter. The price of *Gitanuvada*, a religious text (OL.808) was stated to be 'regular reading.' A patron sometimes commissioned a pothi to be given as dowry. A copy of *Gita* (OL.1989) was got copied to be given to Meenakshi, daughter of Kashi of Berhampur.

Brahmin scribes usually copied Sanskrit manuscripts relating to Veda, Tantra, Ayurveda and Jyotish texts. Scribes belonging to Karan caste also copied Sanskrit *kavyas*. At least one among the forty thousand pothis in the Orissa State Museum library was copied by a woman, Lakshmipriya Jemadei (OL.1917). *Mathura-Mangala*, a *kavya* based on Krishna, was copied by a Muslim, Naseeb Khan, son of Dhani Khan of Khurdha in the year 1938 (OL.1862). Naseeb Khan also copied seven other manuscripts, some of them Hindu religious texts.

There is even an instance of a pothi having been copied by convicts while serving a sentence. The scribes Banamali, a Brahmin and Ramakrishna, a Karan copied the pothi while they were convicts in the Cuttack jail. They mention in the colophon that while doing convict labour on the banks of river Kathjodi they would carry palm-leaves and stylus with them and write the pothi under the benevolent eyes of prison guard Noor Mohammed. They wrote this for a patron, one Pindika, a Karan of Banki in the



'This book belongs to Lingaraja Patnaik'-patron's name on pothi

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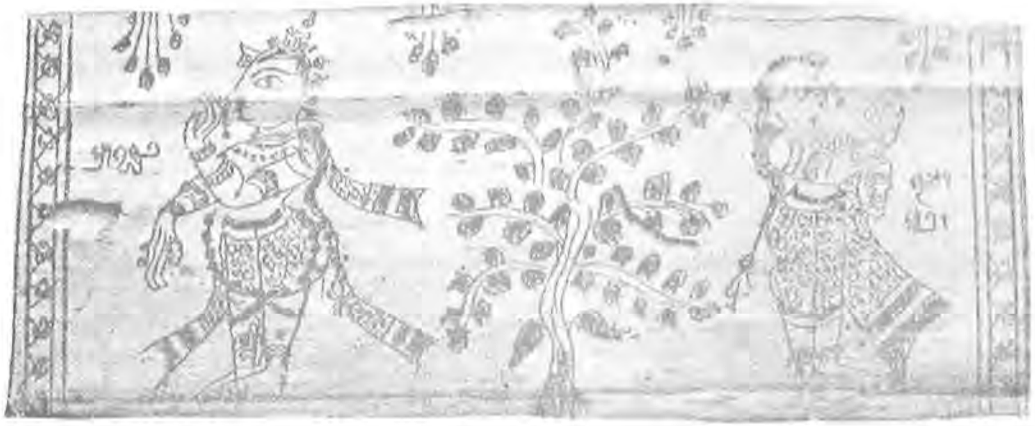
35th anka of Ramachandra (1846 AD).[1]

Though there were many scribes copying pothis, there were not many who did chitra-pothis. These manuscripts had to be carefully prepared, with proper space left for illustrations when the text had been written. Most often, therefore, the scribe and the artist of chitra-pothi was one and the same person. One of the most prolific scribe-artists of chitra-pothis was Sarathi Madala Patnaik, a Karan by caste, who lived in Chasa Limikhandi village in Ganjam district. He gave a complete colophon at the end of each pothi he copied and a typical one reads as follows:

'The book was completed on the tenth day of October, 1887 Samvatsara (AD), in the 47th anka of Shri Shri Virashri Lakshmi Narayana Maharaja on the 26th day of the dark fortnight of Kartika, on a Monday, in the presence of the deity Sri Raghunath Mahaprabhu who is installed in the village school of Gadamutha Chasa Limikhandi village of Vijayanagar Taluka. The scribe is the humble Sarathi Madala Patnaik who seeks the protection of Sita-Rama.'

There is a chitra-pothi of *Rasapoi* done by Sarathi Madala in 1878 AD and a *Kripasindhu Janana* done by him in 1908 AD. He seems to have been a professional scribe copying and illustrating pothis over a period of about thirty years. He copied the books in his own village, sitting in the courtyard of the several temples (Sri Tulasi Devi, Sri Brindavati, Sri Sharada, Sri Raghunath) near the village school. He copied mainly Oriya *kavya* manuscripts: *Dasapoi*, *Premasudhanidhi*, *Shobhavati*, *Rasapoi* etc. One could



Dasapoi scribed by Sarathi Madala (NM)

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SarvangaSundari scribed by Dhananjay (OSM)

imagine him sitting in the temple courtyard, bent over a palm-leaf, stylus in hand, looking like the typical suffering scribe described in the colophons.

There are a few other names of scribe-artists that one comes across. Ramakrishna Das, who only mentioned his name in the colophon and did not give any clue as to his address or the date of copying, copied many *Gita Govinda* manuscripts as also *Dasapoi*.

We come across an author-scribe-artist combination in Dhananjaya, a Brahmin who wrote and illustrated the *Sarvanga Sundari* commentary of *Gita Govinda* (Orissa State Museum. Ext. 166). The colophon of this chitra-pothi reads as follows:

विरेन्द्रस्य मुकुदसिन्दु नृपतेर्दिनेकबन्धोर्नव
त्रिशंके प्रतिपत्तिथो गुरुदिने कन्यागते भास्करे
टीकां पुत्तलिकान्वितं विलिखितं श्रीगीतगोविंदकं
काव्य चारु धनंजयारव्य धरणीदेवेन पक्षंसिते

'A Brahmin, Dhananjay by name, wrote the *Gita Govinda* together with commentary and pictures in the 39th anka of Raja Mukunda Deva on Thursday in Ashwina month.'

The ruler has been identified as Mukunda Deva I (1657-1689 AD), for Mukunda II (1798-1817) did not rule for 39 anka or 32 calendar years. Mukunda III (1888-1927) is also a possibility. Thus the pothi may date to either 1689 or 1920. In the former case, this is the oldest datable chitra-pothi extant. In this commentary of *Gita Govinda*, Dhananjay follows an earlier *Sarvanga Sundari Tika* done by Narayana Das in the 14th century AD.[2]

We also have a father-son combination as artist and scribe. Poet Brajanath Badajena (1730-1798 AD) and his son Ghanashyam together did the chitra-

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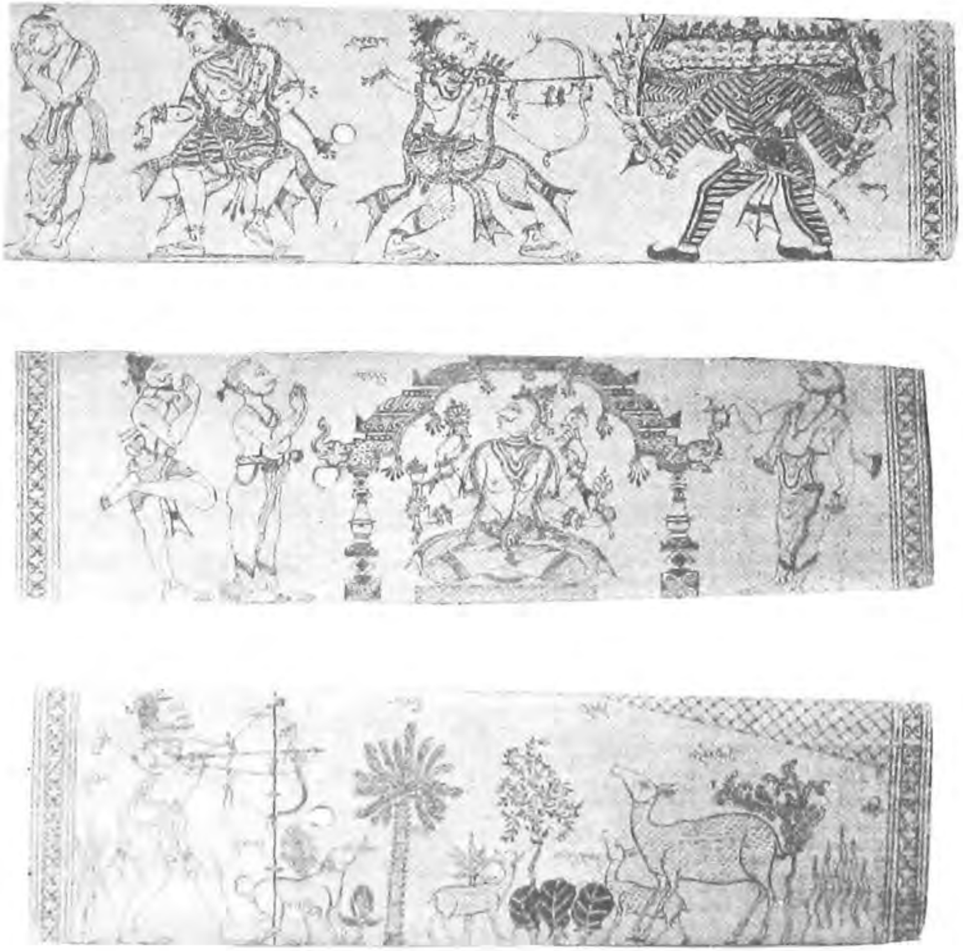

Kripasindhu Janana scribed by Raghunath Prusti (AS)

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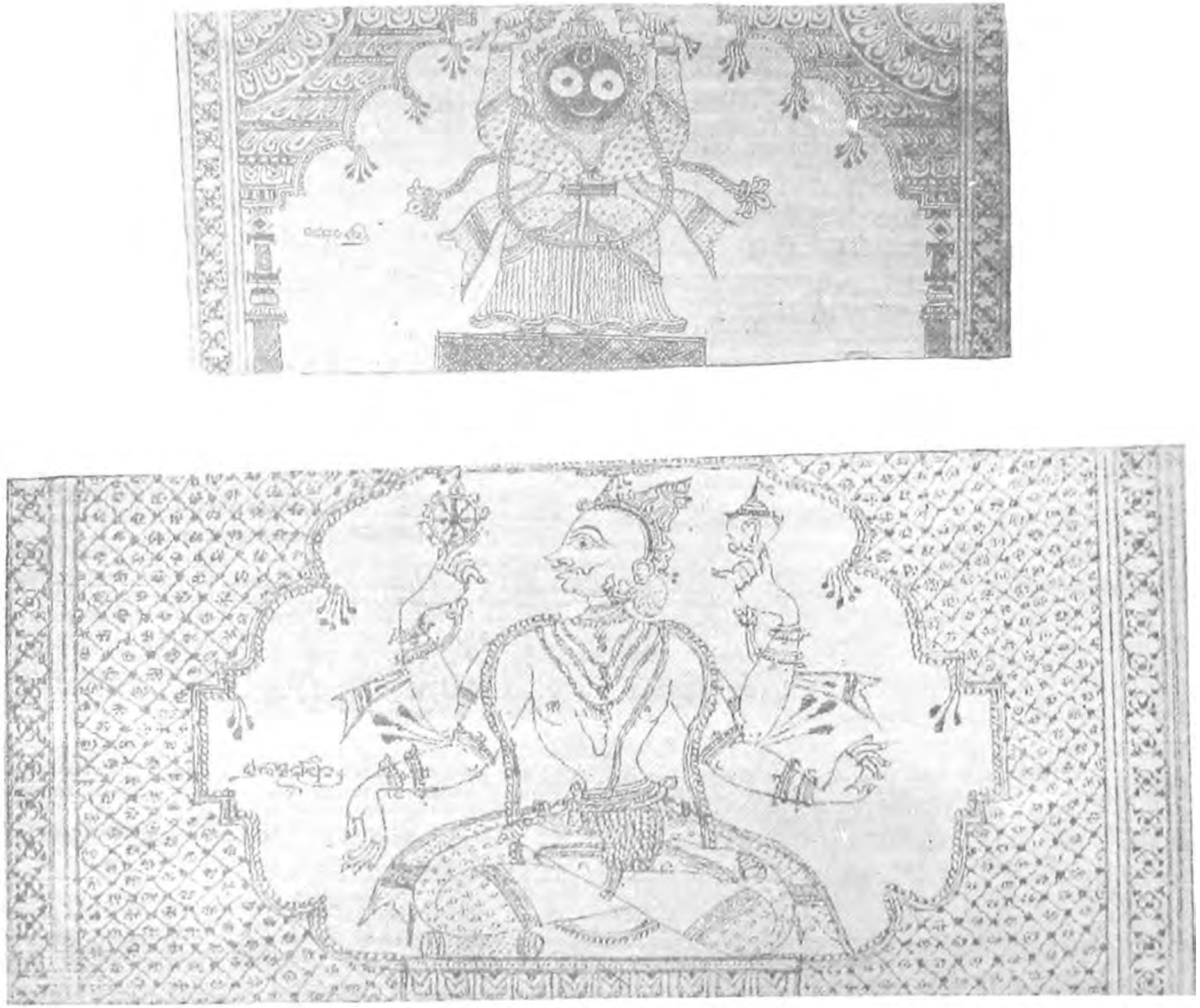

Jagannath and Vishnu in *Kripasindhu Janana* (AS)

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pothi of *Bhagavata*, Books VIII and IX. (Manuscript No. 66 in Sambalpur University Museum). This is how the colophon goes:

'May it please you, oh learned men, to hear about the writing of this pothi. My name is Brajanath and my surname Badajena and I am from a Karan family of Dhenkanal. The learned ones consider me a poet. I am conversant with three types of work—paper, palm-leaf and pictures. The illustrations of books eight and nine are my work. The handwriting is that of my son Ghanashyam.'

The pothi has been dated to 20th November, 1799.[3] Brajanath is reported to have illustrated a *Gita Govinda* pothi and done other paintings.[4]

An important artist was Raghunath Prusti belonging to the caste of oilman from Mundamarai in Dharakot (Ganjam District). He copied, and presumably did the illustrations too, of *Sangita Damodara* (Ext 38 in Orissa State Museum) and *Kripasindhu Janana* (No. 1100 in Aurobindo Sangrahalay, Udaypur).

Whereas most literate people of Orissa had some pothis in their family possession, chitra-pothis were commissioned and owned by the rich elite. There were many princely and feudatory states and estates in Orissa, and the Rajas and Zamindars prided themselves in having chitra-pothis in their palm-leaf manuscript libraries. Many of the chitra-pothis have been collected from erstwhile princely states and Zamindari estates. It was also a tradition in Orissa to present an illustrated manuscript of *Gita Govinda* (or at least the Dasavatara portion of it), on the Vijaya

Dasavatara from *Gita Govinda* (OSM)

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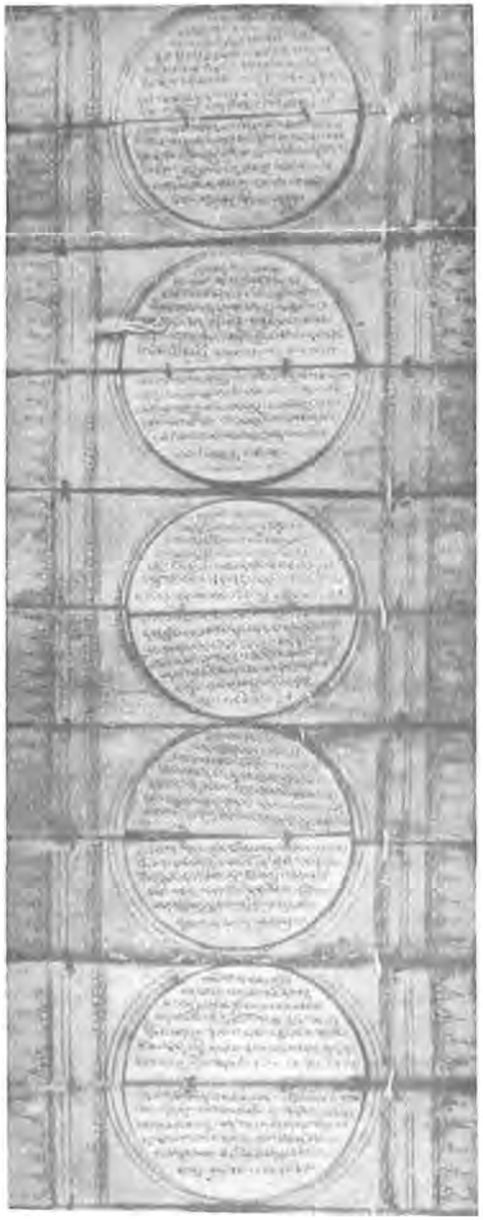

Dasavatara from *Gita Govinda* (OSM)

Dasami day, to the Rajas, officials and other important persons of society.[5]

Many colophons clearly mention the commissioning of a pothi and its execution by the scribe. It is worth reproducing the following colophons:

"Oh you learned men, please read it taking into account both the correct and incorrect writing and do not blame the scribe. The book was completed at ten on Thursday, the thirtieth day of Vrisha and the third day of the bright fortnight of Jyestha in Sri Divyasingha Deva Maharaja's twenty-fifth anka, in Sana 1287 (1880 AD). The scribe of this book is Parikshita Mishra of Pragana Sungha, Mauza Jhadasarapur. Shankar Swain of Sri Ramakrishnapur Banpur gave me an advance and commissioned the writing. He who borrows the book and does not return will have his seven generations go to hell. In Sana 1291 (1884 AD) on Saturday, the tenth day of Bichha, Nabaghana Das of Pragana Matakata Nagar, mauza Dharapur bought the book." (OL.935)

Apparently the man who commissioned the book did not take it and so it was sold to another. In another case, Paramananda Jena, son of Chaitanya Jena of Mauza Geruala, had commissioned a copy of *Dharmasagara* and had paid an advance. Since he did not take the book, the scribe Bhagirathi Mishra returned the money and kept the book himself. (OL.1186)

There were professional scribes who earned their livelihood copying manuscripts. As a scribe puts it: "This scribe knows nothing. He has no other skills.

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Even if he has other skills, they are of no use. His name is Sarveshwar. He has started a school for children and has devoted himself to copying *Chhanda* books." (OL.1245) Another scribe says:

"Sri Ramahari Tripathy commissioned the writing of this book. Since your mind was set on this book, I wrote this with great labour. I am a son to you and am depending on you. If you desire some other book (to be copied), send a message to me. I copy the way I see (the original) and your Ramahari is my refuge. I am in great difficulty. Please continue to have kindness towards me." (OL.55)

Generally the scribe was just another craftsman in the society and eked out a living copying pothis. Fortunately, there was enough demand to sustain the scribe, for gentlemen still preferred to possess palm-leaf pothis, even when printed books were available. In 1916, a pothi of *Nirveda Sadhana Gita*, with 154 folios, was sold by the scribe for a rupee and four annas when the printed book would have been much cheaper (OL. 321). Besides, many texts had not gone into print and this also helped the scribes to continue in their profession.

Writing of pothis was mainly done in Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam districts of Orissa which had a tradition of literature. People of all castes worked as scribes, though traditionally it was the Karan (Kayastha) which was the caste of scribes. Karans were identified as writers right through the early parts of this century. As a matter of fact, Karans were sometimes disparagingly called *patar-kata* or leaf-incisor.[6] It may be interesting to note that in early

Lekhani (PC)

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copper plates of Orissa, it was the Kayastha who first wrote the charter, which was then engraved onto copper by the *vijnani* (engraver). These scribes used to be called Karanika and Adhikaranika.[7]

The artists and illustrators came from different castes unlike their brethren the *pata* painters who came only from the Chitrakar caste. Whereas Chitrakars were *shudras*, belonging to the lowest rungs of the society, palm-leaf scribe-illustrators often belonged to the Brahmin and other higher castes.

The patrons of chitra-pothi were naturally rich men. The price of a chitra-pothi depended on the number and the quality of the illustrations. The artist sometimes repeated the same or similar illustrations on a number of pages to increase their number and get a higher price for the pothi.

Gita Govinda scribed by Ramakrishna Das (PC)

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4. PUSHPIKA

Most Orissan palm-leaf manuscripts have a *pushpika* (colophon) at the end, giving the name of the scribe and the date of copying just as we have today the name of the author and the publisher and the date of publication of a printed book on the title page.

In recording the date in the colophon, the scribes followed the *anka* or the regnal year *(anka-shrahi)* of the Raja of Puri. As a matter of fact, this system is still followed in Orissa in recording the date of birth in horoscopes. The calculation of the anka has some peculiarities. The first year of the reign is treated as the second *anka* and in the notations, the years whose numerals end with 6 or 0 (except 10) are dropped. Thus if the *anka* year is 50, the actual regnal years will be 41 as the numbers 1,6,16,20,26,30,36,40 and 46 are not counted. The colophon also mentioned the day, the lunar fortnight and the month of the regnal year on which the book was completed. To give an instance, the colophon of *Sangita Damodara* reads as follows:

"The book was written in the 33rd anka of Maharaja Sri Divyasingha Deva on the seventh day of the dark fortnight of Jyestha on the third day of the week."

Sangita Damodara scribed by Raghunath Prusti (OSM)

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Divyasingha Deva I reigned from 1687 to 1715 AD. The 33rd anka year equals the 27th year of reign (having dropped 1,6,16,20,26 and 30 from the reckoning). So the writing of the book can be assigned to the year 1714 AD.

A difficulty sometimes arises since many of the Rajas of Puri bore the same name. For instance, there have been three Divyasingha Devas. In such cases one has to go to other clues. Divyasingha mentioned in *Sangita Dạmodaṛa* has to be Divyasingha I or III since Divyasingha II did not have 33 anka years. In cases of further doubt, one could refer to the ephemeris—in the instant case to find out the year in which the seventh day of the dark fortnight in Jyestha was the third day (Tuesday).

The colophon sometimes left no doubt as to which Raja was being referred to. In a pothi in the Orissa State Museum (No. Or.P.978) the colophon says, "When this book was written, Divyasingha Deva was a powerful king. Seeing his power, the *phiṛingees* put him in an iron cage and deported him to Kalapani." Here the reference is obviously to Divyasingha Deva III, who was convicted of murder and deported to Andaman in 1878 AD.

The colophon sometimes mentioned the Oriya *sala* or *sana* year of an era which started on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the Bhadra month of 593 AD. This was the Hijra or Amli era introduced in Orissa during the reign of Akbar and was also known as the Dillishwarabda. In the colophon, the *sana* or *sala* year is given in addition to the regnal year of the Raja of Puri. One can find out the Christian year by

Govinda Chandra scribed by Sarathi Madala (NM)

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adding 593 to the *sana* year. In a few later manuscripts, the Christian era (called *Samvatsara*) and the Christian month are given in the colophon. In some cases, the Saka era (starting in 78 AD) is used. Sometimes, the year was given in a riddle or chronogram as in the following instance:

ख शून्य मुनि चन्द्रमः प्रमित शाक सम्बत्सरे

'The book was completed in the Saka era *kha* (sky=0), *shunya* (cipher=0), *muni* (sages=7) and *chandrama* (moon=1)'. Since digits are to be read from right to left, the year is computed to be Saka era 1700 or AD 1778.[2]

Many colophons contained an apologia for possible mistakes in writing. These are in Sanskrit couplets:

भीमस्यापि रणे भंगो मुनिनाँच मति भ्रम
यदि शुद्धमशुद्धंबा मम दोषो न विद्यते

'Even Bhima runs away from the battle field and saints go wrong. Please do not find fault with me if it is correctly written or there are mistakes.'

Sometimes a simple Oriya couplet entreated the reader to read it all, whether correct or incorrect writing, and not to find fault with the scribe.

शुद्धाशुद्ध न जानामि यादृशं लिखित मया
शुद्धाशुद्ध जनै: कृत्यं लेखको नैव दोषक:

'I do not know what is correct and what is not and have only reproduced the original. It is the author who is to be blamed for right or wrong and the scribe is not at fault.'

Colophon of *Dasapoi* (NM)

Colophon of *Kripasindhu Janana* scribed by Raghunath Prusti (AS)

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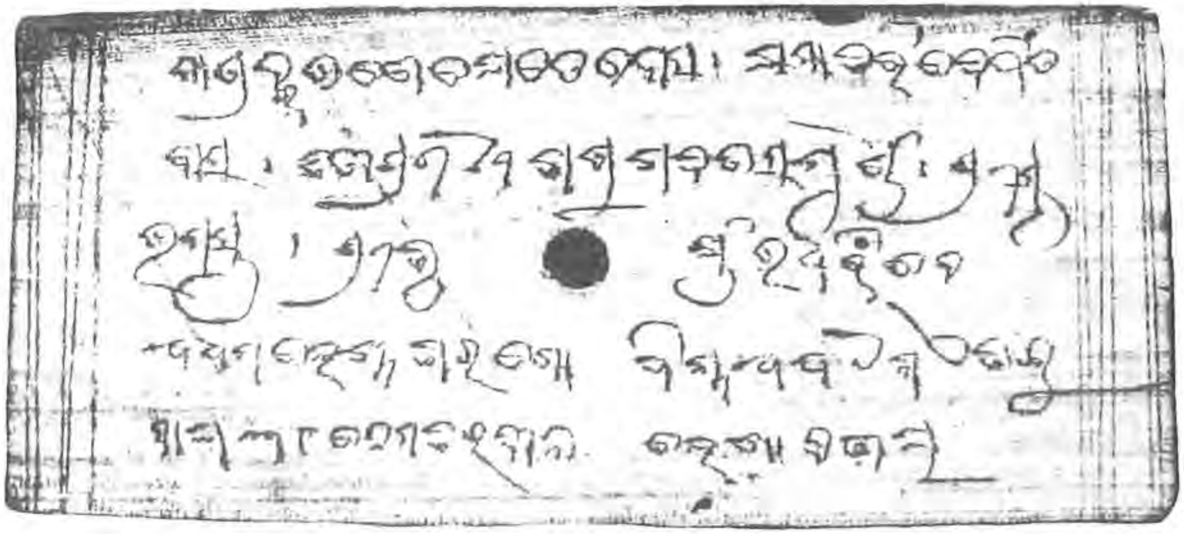

Colophon of *Tika Bhagavata* (OSA)

ग्रन्थकर्त्ता स्वयं व्यासो लेखकस्तु विनायका:
तयोर्विचलिता बुद्धिर्मनुष्याणां च का कथा

'When Vyasa himself is the author of the book and Ganesh the scribe, even their mind sometimes falters. What can one then say of men?'

It is no wonder that scribes often described themselves as wicked, ignorant, wretched, lowly and unlettered. In many cases, the scribes seemed to know only the alphabets and copied mechanically, without understanding the text, thereby committing many mistakes. This, together with some scribes' attempts to improve on the original, resulted in several versions of the same text. While copying from an existing pothi, some scribes copied the original colophon verbatim, thereby making it difficult to know when the copy was made.

The scribe often requested the reader to look after the pothi with the following entreaty in the colophon:

भग्नः पृष्ठ: कटिग्रोवा तुल्य दृष्टिरधोमुखम
दु:खेन लिखित ग्रन्थ: पुत्रवत परिपालयेत

'My back is broken, so are my waist and neck. My eyes are impaired and my head is bent low. I wrote the book with much suffering; do look after it as you would a son.'

Some colophons ended with a request to the owner of the pothi to keep it in good shape.

जलाद्रक्ष तेलाद्रक्ष रक्ष मां श्लथबंधनात
म्राखुभ्यः परहस्तेभ्यः एशः वदति पुस्तकं

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'Protect me from water, protect me from oil; protect me from being loosely tied. Protect me from mice and from strangers' hands. Thus says the book.'

The colophon also left a warning for the person who stole a book. The couplet said:

पुस्तकं हरते यस्तु काणो दुःखी भवेन्नरः
मृताः स्वर्गं न गच्छन्ति पितरो नरकं ब्रजेत

'He who steals the book becomes blind in one eye and remains grief-stricken. When dead, he cannot go to heaven and his ancestors go to hell.'

It also cautioned against lending books in the following words:

पुस्तक कठिनी वामा परहस्तं गता गताः
यदि दैवात समायति नष्टं भ्रष्ट च खंडिता

'Once in another person's hands, a book, a pen, a woman is forever lost; if recovered by chance, it comes back damaged, depraved and spoilt.'

The colophon laid down harsh fate for one who borrowed a book and did not return it. 'He shall incur the displeasure of Sri Sri Hari. He shall be cursed to a sorrowful life for a million births' (Orissa State Museum, Ms. No. OL. 1700). 'His sin shall be equal to matricide and patricide. Seven generations of his successors shall be doomed to serve seven generations of the owner of the book.' (OL.1711). 'He will be bitten by scorpion.' (OL. 2219). 'He will get leprosy and his children would go to hell.' (OL.2217) 'He who steals the book will become blind and wretched' (OL.2031.).

Brahma with palm-leaf and lekhani in *Vaidehisha Vilasa*(PC)

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Besides mentioning the name of the scribe and the date of copying, colophons sometimes provide lot of other interesting information. Sometimes they mention the exact place of writing the pothi—the village school, the temple countryard or the verandah of the patron. They record the number of folia in the pothi and sometimes the number of illustrations. They mention the name of the pothi's owner and describe the process of comissioning the book. The scribe's back-breaking labour is mentioned as also the blessings of his favourite deity in accomplishing the task. Other entries of interest include a switchover to the Karani script while writing the colophon and an occasional signature of the scribe in English script (e.g. that of Boyeeragee Charana Dass) in a pothi of 1875 AD. (OL: 396).

Colophon of *Vaishnavamritam* (PC)

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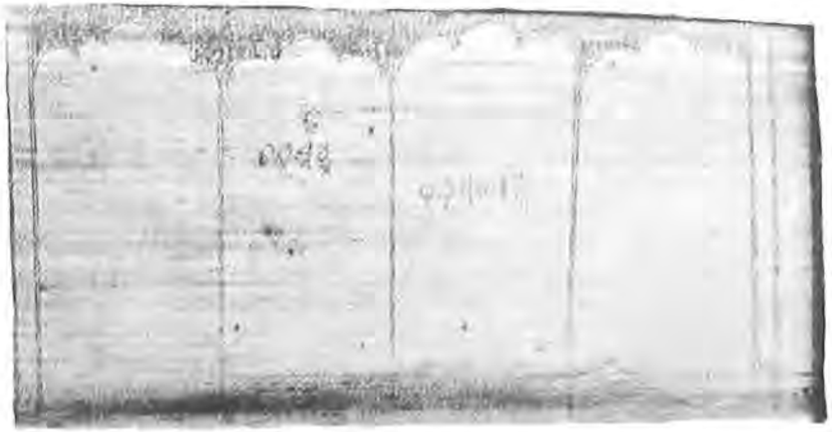
5. THE MAKING OF A POTHI

The making of a chitra-pothi involved preparation of the palm-leaves, writing of the text (leaving space for decoration and illustrations), illumination (embellishment of abstract designs), illustration (addition of figural paintings) and finally the adornment of the covers.

In India, two types of palm-leaves have been used in manuscripts, the palmyra (*Borassus flabellifer*) and the talipot (*Corypha umbraculifera*). Both are fan palms, but the leaves of palmyra are thick, of shorter length and difficult to write on whereas those of talipot are thinner, longer and delicate. The first variety is fragile and tends to weaken and rot quickly. The latter variety is flexible and has tensile strength which makes it more durable. Palmyra manuscripts were written on through incision with an iron stylus, whereas talipot manuscripts were written on with reed pen and ink. In Orissa, palmyra leaves were used though in neighbouring Bengal and in Western Indian manuscripts, talipot was used. There is no evidence of use of talipot in Orissa.

As regards preparation of the palm-leaf for a pothi and writing of it, it is worth quoting at length



Adhyatma Ramayana **(NM)**

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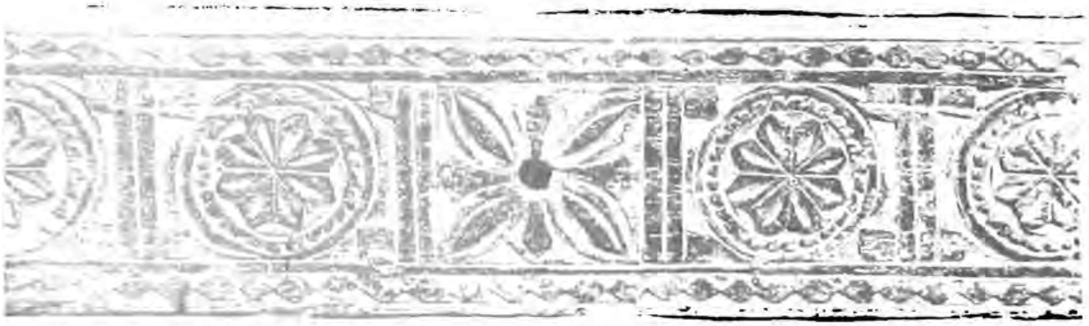

Carved book-covers (OSM)

Babu M.M. Chakravarti who was Deputy Magistrate, Jajpur in Cuttack district at the turn of the 19th century and had made a detailed study of Oriya language and literature based on palm-leaf manuscripts. He wrote at a time when writing on palm-leaf was very common in Orissa.[1]

"The Pothis are composed of the leaves of the palm-trees (*Borassus Flabellus*), which serve manifold purposes; when tied together as a broom, when spread out as a fan, when put between bamboos as a *tatti*, when fixed with a handle as an umbrella, and when evenly cut and seasoned as *talpatra* or the depository in writing of local knowledge. All leaves are not fit for being written. The leaves must be neither too old, nor too young, neither too much torn up nor too much curved. Those which are three or four month's old, just when the leaves are spreading, are preferred. They are intact, greenish-looking, longer and broader. According to length and breadth they are sorted, the longest and the broadest of the inner leaves being considered the best.

The leaves are next given what is termed the *balikasa*. In sand they are kept buried for a day with some water over the sand. This seasons the leaves; and for ordinary purposes or for the zemindar's accounts such leaves suffice. But for *pothis* which are intended to be more permanently kept, a further seasoning is necessary. This goes by the name of *haldi-kasa*. The better sorts of leaves are sorted and then put into a solution of turmeric and sour boiled-rice water (*amani*). They are kept immersed for about half an hour, and on being taken out are found to have

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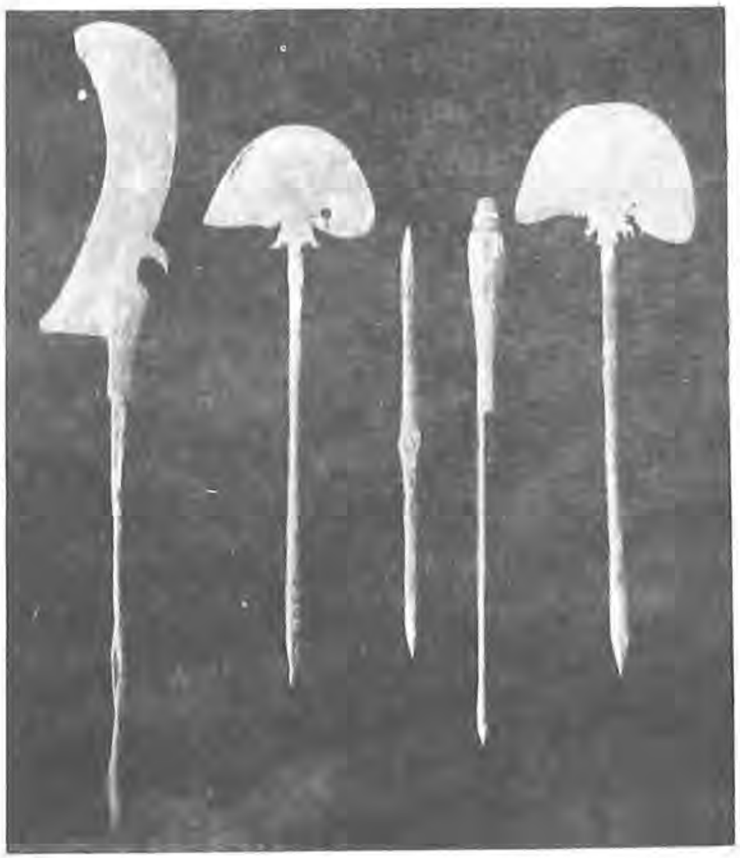
acquired a darker colour and to have become more elastic. They are next dried either by exposure in the sun or to a current of air. When fully dried the leaves are fit for writing.

For books a number of the leaves are taken and are bored in the middle by a pointed instrument named *phurani* and through the holes so made a string is passed. The thread further passes through a wooden cover at each end. The wooden covers serve as a guard to the leaves, and are often carved. The string is sufficiently long (2 to 5 ft.) to be wound round the book over and over. The edges of the leaves are then cut even by some cutting instrument and next rubbed smooth with a stone. The book is then fit for a pothi, and is known as *sanchi*.

Next comes the writing instrument which is an iron stylus locally known as *lekhani*. The stylus is usually plain but is often ornamented. In Orissa three varieties of stylus are used, according to the shape of the upper end, viz., (1) either sharp-pointed (2) or knife-shaped (3) or ear-shaped. The lower-end of the stylus is sharp as the end of a needle, and is used to cut letters on the palm leaves. The sharp portion of the upper end is employed in cutting the palm leaves. A stylus costs from three annas to a rupee.

The *pothis* are written either by the owner himself, or if able to pay, by some hired worker. Round about Puri the charge is about either eight to twelve annas for thousand *shlokas*. In Jajpur the charge is an anna for an *adhyaya* or Canto. The charge is very moderate. Extra charges are paid for good and neat hand-writing, or in the case of Sanskrit works, for



Lekhani of various shapes and sizes (OSM)

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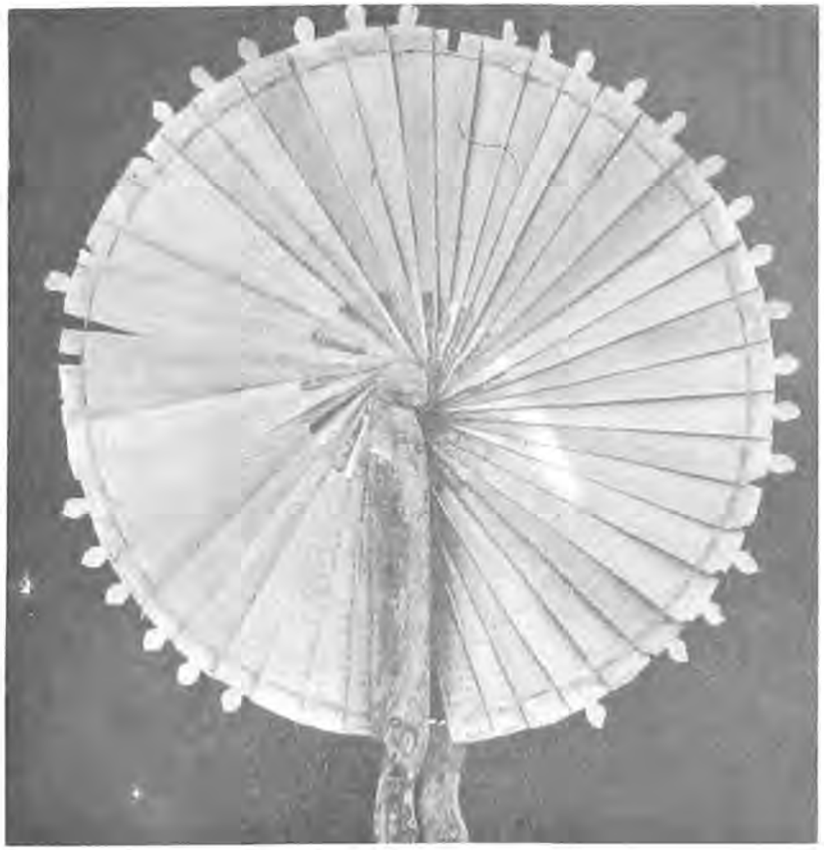

Fan-shaped *Gita Govinda* (OSM)

correct copies. The rule for good handwriting is contained in the following *shloka:*

समानि समशोर्षाणि घनानि विरलानि च
अव्याकुलंच मात्राणि यो लिखति सो पंडित:

The letters written with the stylus are themselves legible; but to make them more legible ink is used. The ink is passed over the writing and filling the interstices of letters makes them clearer. The ink is made in several ways. It may be prepared by mashing in water the leaves of the aquatic plant *Kesadura* and mixing with the soot of the rice-boiling earthen pot (*bhat-handi*), or it may be prepared by crumbling in hand the *Kesadura* leaves or the leaves of the creeper *bantara,* half burning them in burnt straw, and then passing them over the writing to be inked. The ink is fairly permanent.

The palm leaves are fragile and do not last long. In addition no special care is taken to preserve them. As they are mainly damaged in the rains, the only precaution taken is to expose them to the sun in the month of Bhadra when the sun shines very hot. Against white ants so common in Orisa, the only precaution is to keep them on raised bamboo platforms a man high or on shelved platforms, when the number is large. The use of camphor etc. is unknown, and a white insect with two standing hairs on the head commits much depredation. Time also plays great havoc, the old palm-leaves crumbling to pieces. Hence after 30 or 40 years the pothis have to be recopied"

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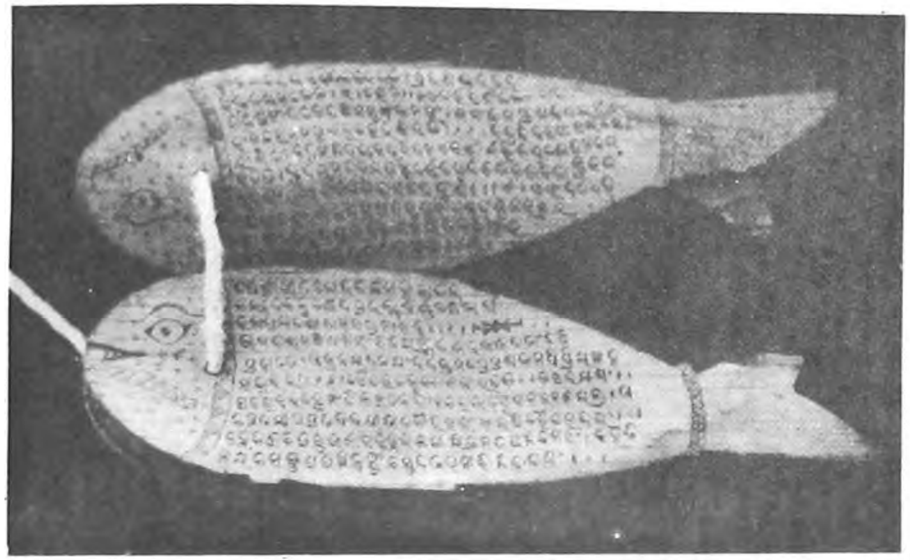
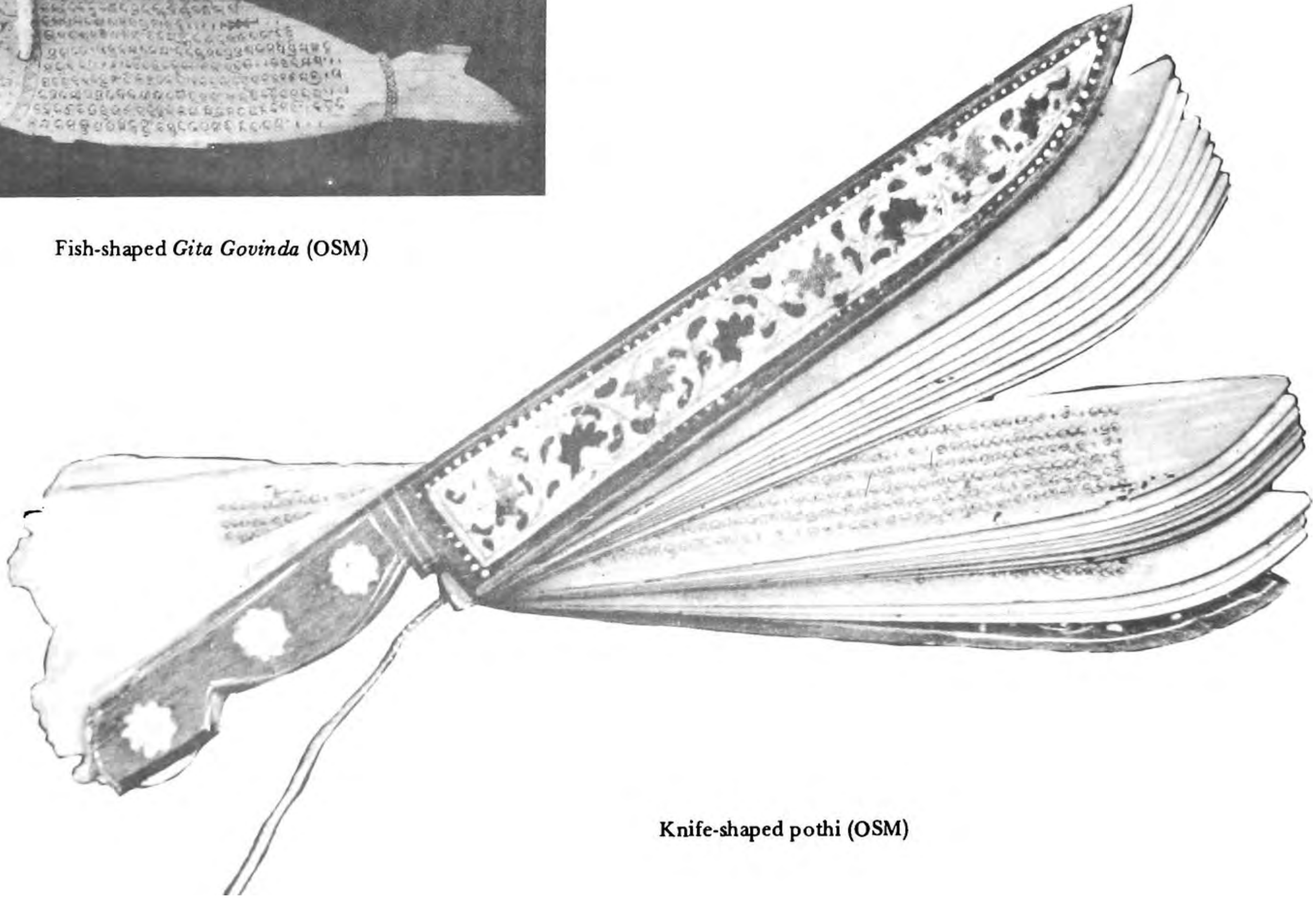


Fish-shaped *Gita Govinda* (OSM)



Knife-shaped pothi (OSM)

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Gita Govinda on stitched leaves (RL)

Mediaeval Oriya literature is full of references to palm-leaf and *lekhani* as writing materials. In an Oriya fiction of late eighteenth century, there is mention of palm-leaves, presumably processed and in the *sanchi* or *sancha* form, being sold in the market-place.[2]

The leaves were sometimes cut into different shapes making manuscripts in the shape of a fish, a sword or a mouse. A standard pothi was usually of leaves about 35 cm long and 4 cm wide. There were, however, pothis of much bigger size some going to even 65 cm long. There were small pothis too. There is a pothi in the Orisa State Museum (Ext 18) which is only 6.2 cm. long and 3 cm wide. Leaves were also sometimes stitched together to give the artist a larger area to work on.

As mentioned earlier, 'writing' was done by etching or incising on the leaf with an iron stylus called a *lekhana* or *lekhani*. The stylus was from 15 to 25 cm long and usually had a fan-shaped top. There were some styles with two writing ends, called *domuna* or double-pointed. In a recent excavation in Kalahandi district, a stylus made of *ashtadhatu* (an alloy of eight sacred metals) has been found. The normal way of writing on the palm-leaf was for the scribe to sit on the floor and write with the stylus, holding the palm-leaf on the knee.

If it was to be a chitra-pothi, the scribe took care, while writing the text, to leave space for embellishments and illustrations. When written on and illustrated, the pile of leaves were strung on a cord through a hole in the centre and held together by a pair of wooden covers at top and bottom of the pile.

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The covers were sometimes carved and painted on, specially in the case of chitra-pothis. In rare cases, ivory covers have been used. For safe-keeping, several *pothis* used to be bundled together and tied with cloth. Deer skin was sometimes used to wrap pothis.

Scribes naturally had to have a good handwriting, having the virtues of readableness, beauty and character. Since many of the pothis were written on commissioned basis and there was always a number of professional scribes, most of the pothis are written in a good legible hand. As regards the beauty of the writing, one must consider the nature and shape of the Oriya alphabet. Of the Oriya character, it is said that it is 'of all Indian characters the ugliest, clumsiest and most cumbrous. Some of the letters so closely resemble the others that they can with difficulty be identified'[3]. This description does not seem to be fair, for the same can also be said of many another Indian alphabet. On the other hand, Oriya characters have been praised for their beauty. Upendra Bhanja has compared the round alphabets to *Nageswara* flowers and the writing to a line of young honey-bees.[4] With the incorporation of different *matras*, the characters lost their uniform size and it was indeed a challenge to the scribe to make a neat beautiful line of them. Upendra compares this task to the *nayika's* arranging of the hairs of her eyebrows (which are of different lengths) to make a beautiful line on the forehead.[5]

It is, however, another matter that the scribe with a good handwriting was also very often poor in spelling. As Beams said in 1872, 'the Oriya seldom

Scribe writing on palm-leaf

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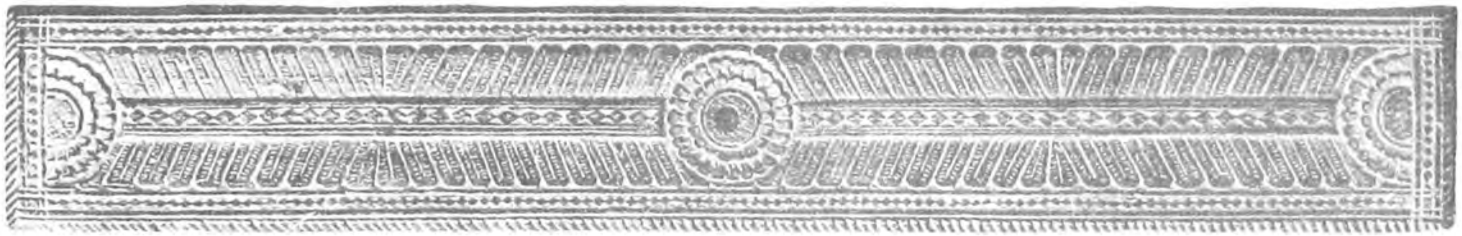
Pothi wrapped in deer-skin (BL)

Lekhani of ashta-dhatu



Carved book-cover (NM)

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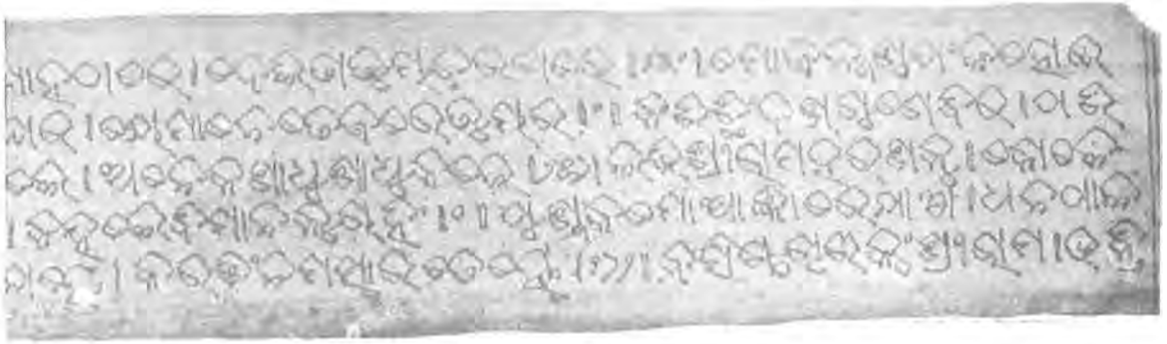
reads and not one man in a hundred can write his native language without falling into the grossest errors of spelling and grammar at every turn'[6]. One, therefore, comes across glaring instances of errors in spelling in Oriya pothis. This led to problems of understanding and ambiguity in meaning, though it did sometimes help the rhetorical poet to use it to his advantage for getting several meanings out of a single line.

Added to this was the absence of space between words and the lack of punctuation marks in Oriya writing of the period. The sentences were a continuous row of characters with only I or II signifying the end of a line of a verse. A decorative O was sometimes used at the end of a line. In his characteristic style, Upendra compares the line of hair on the *nayika's* abdomen terminating at the navel to a line of nice black letters of an erotic verse ending with an O to signify the end of the line.[7] Punctuation marks were introduced in Oriya writing at a considerably later period. As a matter of fact, Rciketts, the Commissioner of Orissa, had written to the Magistrate of Pooree in 1838, "Punctuation would be an immense improvement and sentences which would be perfectly unintelligible without correct punctuation are by it rendered easily comprehensible and clear."[8]

The width of the palm leaf was good enough to write about ten lines if the letters were small and only about four to five lines if the letters were big. The scribe sometimes tried to show his calligraphic excellence by writing minuscule letters. The test

Sarvanga Sundari (OSM)



Ramayana (PC)

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Ganesha and Saraswati in *Kripasindhu Janana* (AS)

seems to have been to cram the *Vishnu Sahasranama* or the thousand names of Vishnu on to a single page of palm-leaf. Several such sheets are available in the Orissa State Museum collection (Ext-49, P-17 A, P-17 B). In case of commentaries, there was a convention to write the main text in the centre of the page and to give the gloss at the top and bottom of the page. Sometimes the main text was written in bigger letters to distinguish it from the commentary. We have manuscripts of *Sarvanga Sundari Tika* and *Rasa Panchadhyayi* in which this practice has been followed.

In many chitra-pothis, one comes across blank spaces, which were apparently left for illustrations, but were not incised. This would confirm the presumption that the text was written first, leaving blank areas for doing illustrations later. Since the scribe was often himself the illustrator, he knew exactly how much space to leave for embellishments and illustrations.

The scribe started the pothi with a Shri Shubhamastu or Shri Ganeshaya Namah. The first page of a chitra-pothi vould also invariably have a picture of Ganesha. The other deities to adorn the first page would be Sarasvati, or if it was an erotic text, Kandarpa, the god of love. Many Upendra Bhanja *kavyas* show the poet paying his obeisance to Rama, Ganesha, Shiva and other gods.

The last page of the pothi gave the colophon. Some scribes gave complete details of the date, place and circumstances of the writing of the pothi, but most preferred to simply state that so and so was the scribe. This followed the usual entreaties not to blame

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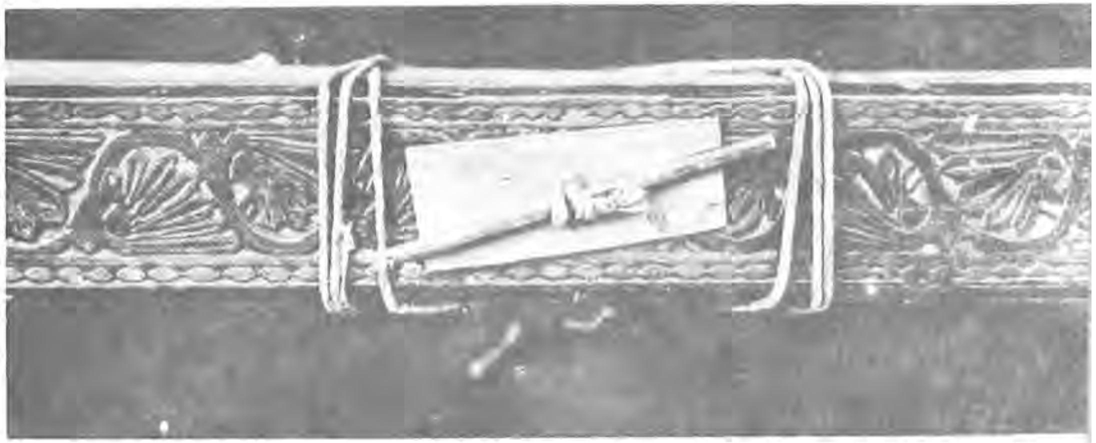
the scribe for the mistakes etc. Sometimes a pothi had a blank page on top on which the owner scribbled the fact of his ownership: This book belongs to so and so.

There was also the practice of painting the wooden covers with which the leaves were strung. The oldest datable Orissan painting is on a book cover which contained a manuscript of *Vishnu Purana* bearing a date equivalent to 1499 AD[9]. That there was a convention of painting the boards is borne out by a reference by Upendra to the practice of illustrating the end leaf of a pothi.[10] Whatever the subject of the pothi, the painting on the book cover had one of the standard themes which included *daśhavatara,* coronation of Rama or a Krishna-lila scene. If it was an erotic text, the cover had an erotic painting. In a rare case, the name of the text was written on the painting on the book cover. Sometimes, the name of the pothi was written on a small piece of palm-leaf and fastened to the cover with the string in the middle, so that one could know which pothi it was without opening the pothi—something akin to the title on the spine in a modern book.

The wooden boards were painted with colour after applying a primer. Sometimes these were wrapped with primed cloth on which the painting was done. The painting on the primed board was perhaps done by professional painters called Chitrakars, and not by the illustrator of the pothi, who was adept at doing line drawings only. Besides, the paintings on the cover show distinct stylistic similarities with *patas* painted by the Chitrakars.



Vichitra Bharat (OSM)

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Young Rama and Saraswati in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

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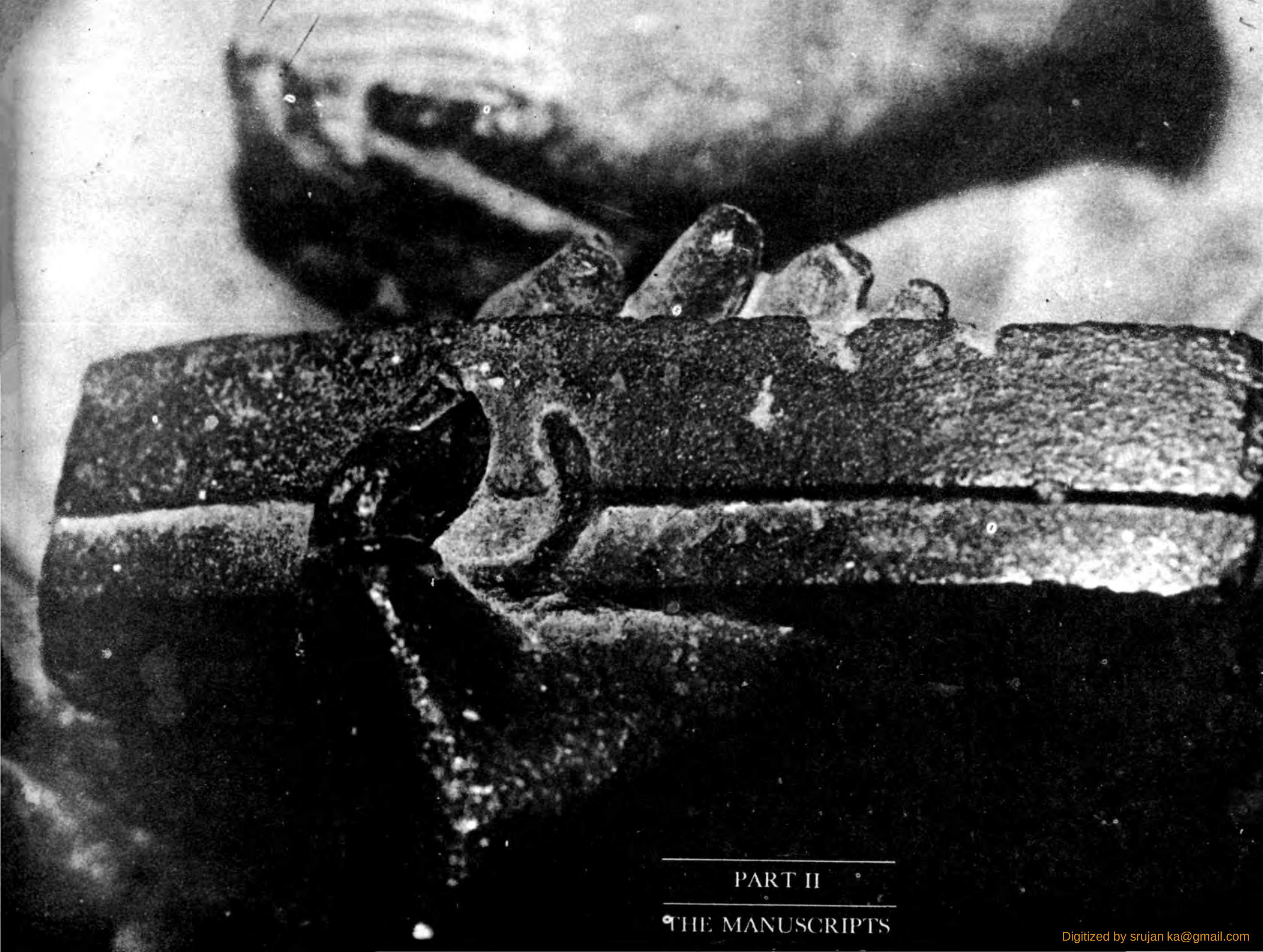

PART II

THE MANUSCRIPTS

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6. GITA GOVINDA

Barring the epics Mahabharat and Ramayana, no other piece of literature had as much impact on the cultural life of the people in India as did Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*. Written in the twelfth century in eastern India, this dramatic lyrical poem was already known in western India by the end of the thirteenth century and was to become popular all over the country in the years to follow. It influenced Indian religious literature, poetry, music, dance, theatre and the plastic arts as no other book had done.

Gita Govinda had special relevance to Orissa where, according to legend, it was written. Jayadeva is supposed to have composed the poem in Puri, where he had come to live. Legend also has it that his wife Padmavati was a dancing girl in the Jagannath temple in Puri and she danced as Jayadeva composed the poem.

According to *Madala Panji*, the temple chronicle, Narasimha Deva II (1278-1307AD) introduced the ritual singing of *Gita Govinda* in the Puri temple. During the reign of Purushottama Deva (1467-1497 AD), Divakara Mishra wrote *Abhinava Gita Govinda*, which was attributed to the king. Recitation from this

Jagannath temple in *Ushabhilasha* (OSM)

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***Gita Govinda* (MR)**

book was introduced in the temple, but this seems to have met with resistance. Purushottama's successor Prataparudra, therefore, issued the following orders in a stone inscription in the temple itself:

'*Gita Govinda* will be danced to at the time of food offerings to the deities and from the evening incense-burning ceremony to the time of the dressing of the deities for bed. The troupes of dancing girls will learn no song other than *Gita Govinda*. They will sing no other song. No other dance shall be performed before the great deity. Besides the dance troupes, the four Vaishnava singers will sing only *Gita Govinda*. Those not versed in singing *Gita Govinda* will follow in chorus and shall learn no other song. If any temple functionary allows any other song or dance to be performed, be it be known that he is a traitor to Jagannath.'

It is significant that the king made this announcement during the car festival of 1500 AD. Singing of *Gita Govinda* continues to be a ritual in the Jagannath temple even to this day.

Gita Govinda has had many translations in Oriya, the first verse translation having been done by Dharanidhar, who is placed in the later part of the sixteenth century. Several other translations followed, the more important ones being Brindavan Das's *Rasavaridhi* and Dinakrishna Das's *Amritasagara Boli*. It was also rendered into the popular nine-letter Bhagavata metre in two versions by Bajri Das and Uddhav Das in the seventeenth century. There were even some translations in a mixed language of Oriya and Bengali at a later date.

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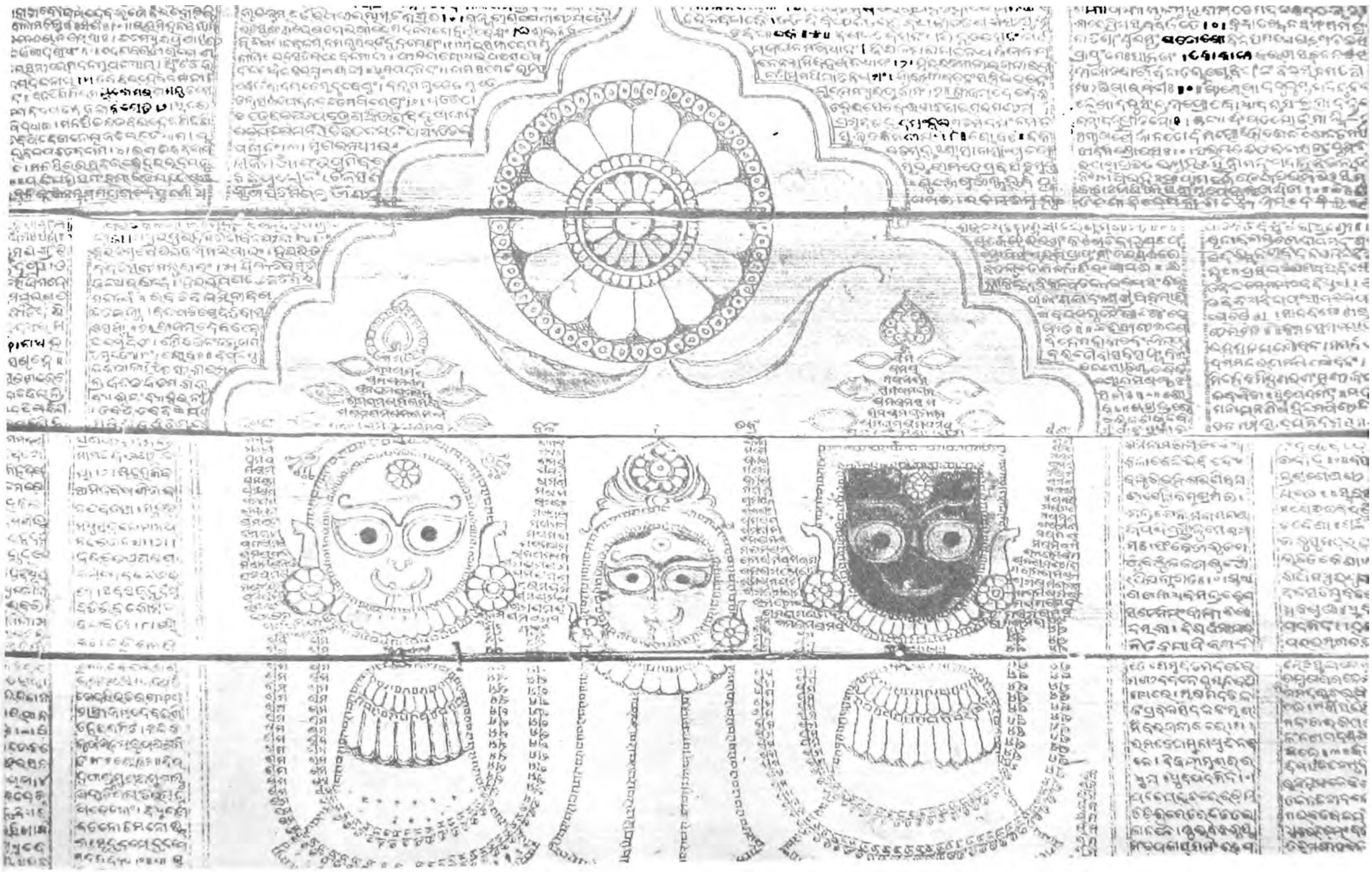

Gita Govinda on stitched leaves (NM)

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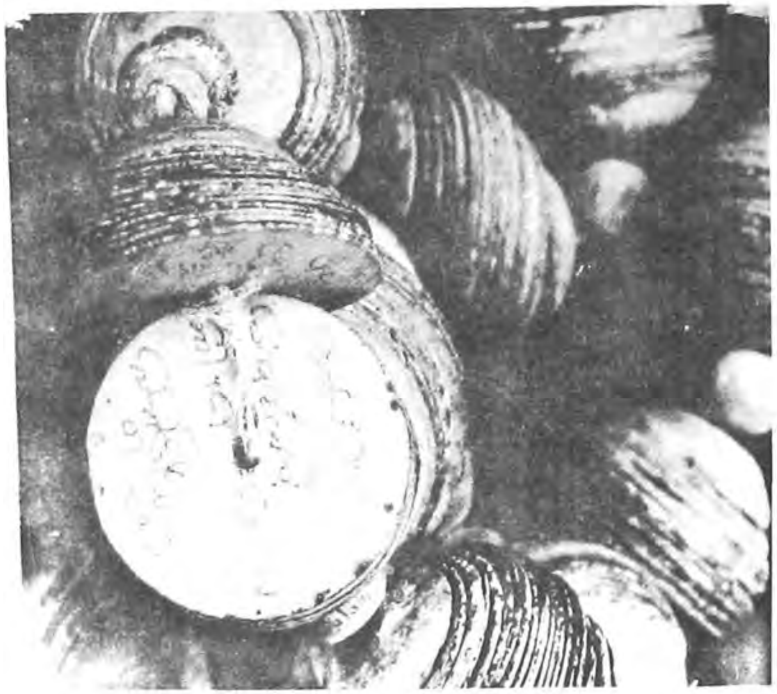

Gita Govinda **on palm-leaf garland and details of a bead**
(OSM)

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Gita Govinda influenced most of the Oriya poets of the period, who liberally borrowed from Jayadeva. Upendra Bhanja is supposed to have said that he recognised no one under the sun as a poet, but he revered Jayadeva and Dinakrishna while placing his left foot on the heads of other so-called poets.

Gita Govinda also got into Orissan legend. A story has it that a village maiden was once plucking brinjals in her field while singing a song from *Gita Govinda*. Lord Jagannath, who was extremely fond of these songs, followed her and his clothes got torn by the thorns of brinjal plants. Next morning, the servants of the temple noticed that the clothes of the Lord were completely tattered.

It is, therefore, no wonder that *Gita Govinda* became a favourite with Oriya scribes who copied the Sanskrit text in Oriya characters on palm-leaves. Out of about seven hundred Sanskrit *kavya* mauscripts noticed in the Orissa State Museum, a hundred are manuscripts of *Gita Govinda*.[1] *Gita Govinda* got written on ivory sheets, on bamboo leaf and on small palmleaf discs of various sizes which, when strung together, formed a rosary of beads. Verses from *Gita Govinda* got woven onto fabrics called Gita Govinda *Khandua* for ritual use in the Jagannath temple. It also became a custom to make gifts of illustrated pothis of *Gita Govinda* (or at least the *dashavatara* portion of it) to *rajas* and zamindars and other rich patrons.

The dramatic structure of *Gita Govinda* with its three main characters, Krishna, Radha and Sakhi and the events spread over a little more than two days must have delighted the illustrators of chitra-pothis as

Gita Govinda **on bamboo-leaf (OSM)**

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Gita Govinda (PC)

Closing scene of *Sarvanga Sundari* (OSM)

much as it had inspired painters in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Assam. The little masterpiece starts with the words of Nanda:

'The sky is dark with clouds
Tamala trees darken the forest
The night frightens him
Radha, take him home.

Thus ordered, Radha and Krișhna leave and passing through thickets on the way, 'their secret passion triumphs on the bank of river Yamuna.' There is separation and longing for each other, Radha sulking and sullen and Krishna repentant, the indefatigable Sakhi going from one to the other carrying endless angry messages back and forth, till at last the lovers unite again. The story ends with Radha asking her lover to dress her up after a night of love:

Paint my breast with leaf designs
Put colour on my cheeks
Fasten the girdle round my hips
Twine my heavy braid with flowers
Fix rows of bangles on my hands
And jewelled anklets on my feet.

And Krishna, the yellow-robed lover is delighted to do what Radha said.

In Orissa, many *tikas* or commentaries of *Gita Govinda* were written as early as the fourteenth century. These evaluated the work in terms of poetics and rhetorics and the grammars of figures of speech. Kaviraj Narayana Das, an Orissan poet wrote *Sarvangasundari Tika* of *Gita Govinda* in Sanskrit in the second half of the fourteenth century and it was one of the popular commentaries of the book. Inspired by

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this *tika*, Dhananjay, a Brahmin wrote another *Sarvangasundari Tika*. He also did the illustrations himself in the manuscript now in the Orissa State Museum.

In writing the commentary, the scribe wrote the text from *Gita Govinda* in bigger letters in the centre of the palm-leaf and wrote the commentary of the lines in smaller letters around it.

There were many Sanskrit *kavyas* and dramas inspired by *Gita Govinda* and illustrated *pothis* of two Sanskrit dramas are available. One is Rupa Goswamy's *Vidagdha-Madhava* and the other Jayadeva Acharya's *Vaishnavamritam*.

Rupa Goswamy, the author of *kavyas Hamsaduta* and *Uddhava-Sandesha* and dramas *Lalita-Madhava* and *Vidagdha-Madhava* was one of the chief theoreticians of the Vaishnava faith propagated by Chaitanya who had by now developed a doctrinal theological system of Vaishnavism. Rupa was an outstanding Vaishnava scholar having profound shastric knowledge and he authored many important works on Bhakti-Shastra and theology.

Vidagdha-Madhava deals with Brindavan *lila* of Krishna. (*Lalita-Madhava* deals with Dwaraka *lila*). In this drama, Radha has two friends, Lalita and Vishakha and Krishna too has a friend Madhumangala. There is also an old woman Paurnamasi. As in *Gita Govinda*, the friends of Radha bring about her union with Krishna.

Jayadeva Acharya, who flourished in the sixteenth century was the son of Jivadeva, a contemporary and teacher of king Prataparudra. His

Krishna and companions in *Sarvanga Sundari* (OSM) and in *Vidagdha Madhava* (OSM)

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Vaishnavamritam is again about Krishna's *lila* and as in *Gita Govinda*, there is a *dashavatara* invocation of Krishna.

There were many imitations of *Gita Govinda* in Oriya language too, the most popular of them being *Dasapoi*, an Oriya *poi* peom by Yuga Bhanja. (The authorship is sometimes ascribed to Upendra Bhanja). *Dasapoi*, also deals with the encounters between Radha and Krishna in the groves of Brindavan, again in spring time. It is again Duti (messenger) who, like Sakhi in *Gita Govinda*, acts as the go-between and brings Radha and Krishna together. *Rasapoi* of Govindai is yet another Oriya *kavya* on the model of *Gita Govinda* , in which Brindavati is the Sakhi. It is interesting to note that in the captions to pictures in *Gita Govinda* palm-leaf manuscripts, Sakhi is referred to as Duti.

Kandarpa with Radha and Krishna in *Dasapoi* (OSA)

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7. KRISHNA & RAMA

Though *Mahabharat* of Sarala Das was one of the most popular books of Orissa, we do not come across any illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts of the Oriya epic. The same is true of the Oriya *Bhagavata,* which was still more popular. The reason may be that these were voluminous texts and it would have involved enormous labour to illustrate the monumental works. So far as *Bhagavata* is concerned, however, we do find illustrations of some of the *skandas,* notably the eighth, ninth and the thirteenth, dealing with the Krishna theme. (Jagannath Das had written the first eleven *skandas* of the *Bhagavata.* The twelfth and thirteenth *skandas* were written by Mahadev Das and Dwaraka Das respectively).

The *Bhagavata* which gained popularity in its illustrated version was *Tika Bhagavata,* a synopsis of the original work in a few lines. For instance, the first *skanda* of Tika Bhagavata quotes the following two lines in Sanskrit:

पाण्डवं दुःख नाशाय अर्जुन अर्द्ध जीवन
शाल्व शिशु विनाशाय वासुदेव नमस्तुते

This is followed by ten lines from Jagannath Das's *Bhagavata* which tells of the killing of Shalva and Shishupala. The whole *Bhagavata* has thus been condensed to about a hundred lines. The text became

Mahaprabhu Janana (OSM)

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Jagannath trinity in *Bhagavata* (AS)

Rama in *Tika Bhagavata* (OSA)

a favourite with illustrators, since all they had to do was to make a picture of the particular characters mentioned in the short *skanda. Tika Bhagavata* was usually copied on small palm-leaf folios, with the text written on one half and the picture of Akrura, Rama, Uddhava, Jagannath or Ananta drawn on the other half. The following gives a list of gods and goddesses and other characters mentioned in the different *skandas* and illustrated:

One—Salva, Shishupala
Two—Narada, Brahma, Shuka, Parikshita
Three—Uddhava, Hiranya, Jagannath
Four—Dhruva
Five—Bharat
Six—Chitraketu, Ajamila
Seven-Prahlada
Eight—Mohini
Nine—Parashurama, Rama
Ten—Akrura, Krishna, Balarama
Eleven—Krishna, Uddhava
Twelve—Markandeya.

Another popular Krishna text which was being illustrated was the *Artatrana Chautisa* (otherwise known as *Kripasindhu Janana*) of Dinakrishna Das. This *Janana* (prayer) written in the *chautisa* form (the first letters of each line of a verse following the *chautis* or thirty four consonants of the Oriya alphabet) was addressed to Krishna, the ocean of kindness (*Kripasindhu*) and the saviour of the distressed (*Artatrana*). It is said of this poem that this real human document reflected the poet's own spiritual and physical suffering and gained universal appeal

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through the intensity of his agony and the sincerity of a spontaneous human cry. Dinakrishna is supposed to have daily recited this poem before Jagannath.[1]

Mathura Mangala of Bhakta Charan Das is another Krishna-based *kavya* which is available in an illustrated version. It deals with Krishna's leaving for Mathura on Kamsa's orders and the desolation of the women of Brindavan. The illustrations show, among other incidents, Kamsa writing a letter to Nanda, the chief herdsman of Gokul, Akrura the messenger delivering the letter to Nanda, the drummer announcing on the streets of Gopa (Gokul) that Krishna was leaving.

Krishna figures in another *kavya, Gopichandana* by Chanda Das. It tells the story of Krishna after he had killed Kamsa and had gone to Dwaraka and settled down there with his eight new wives. When these ladies wanted to meet the fabled ladies of Gopa, Krishna sent Bidusakha to bring them to Dwaraka and asked Visvakarma to build dwellings for their stay.

Smaller poems like *Jala Keli* and *Na-poi* describing the amorous sports of Krishna have also been illustrated.

Unlike *Mahabharat,* the Rama epic was illustrated oftener and we find illustrated manuscripts of Balaram Das's *Ramayana,* Krishna Chandra Rajendra's *Ramayana* as also *Adhyatma Ramayana* of Gopala Telenga and of Haladhar Das.

Upendra Bhanja also wrote a Rama saga and called it *Vaidehisha Vilasa.* At the beginning of the book he explains that since he had accepted the

Nanda and Akrura with letter in *Mathura Mangala* (AS)

Ramabhisheka in *Sangita Damodara* (OSM)

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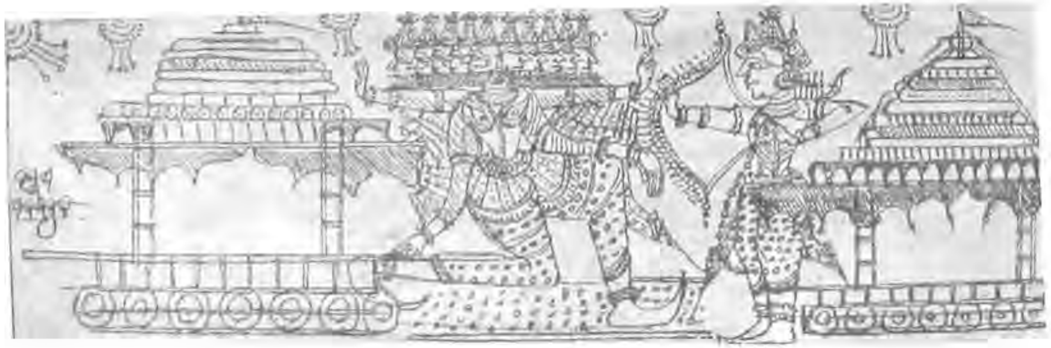
Ramataraka *mantra,* he felt like writing the story of Rama. With unusual humility, he compliments Valmiki, Vedavyasa, Hanumana, Kalidasa, Bhojaraj and Balaram Das who had written about Rama before him and compared himself to a firefly in a galaxy illuminated by such bright stars. *Vaidehisha Vilasa,* with its ornamental language and ehetorics, became quite popular with readers.

Vaidehisha Vilasa gives the complete Ramayana story: the birth of Ravana, Rishyashringa's boon to Dasharatha, the birth of Raåa, killing of Tadaka, resurrection of Ahalya, breaking of Shiva's bow and marriage to Sita, Rama's banishment, cutting off of Surpanakha's nose, killing of Maricha in the guise of a two-headed golden deer, abduction of Sita, Jatayu's death, killing of Vali, Hanuman's visit to Lanka and burning the city, Rama's expedition to Lanka, death of Ravana, Sita's ordeal by fire and finally Rama's coronation.

Upendra Bhanja, the devotee of Rama also introduced his favourite god in another of his *kavyas*, *Lavanyavati.* In this *kavya*, illustrators often gave full treatment to the Ramayana story in the chitra-pothis.



Adhyatma Ramayana (OSM)

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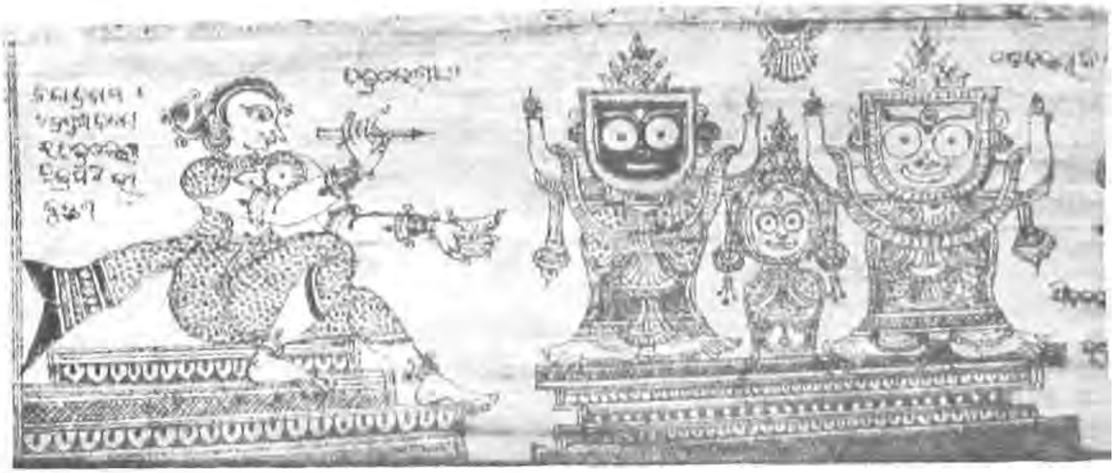
8. ORIYA KAVYAS

The seventeeth and eighteenth centuries were the golden age of *kavya* literature in Orissa. It was during this period that most of the major Oriya *kavyas* were written. Whereas earlier *kavyas* like Shishu Shankar Das's *Ushabhilasha* were based on stories from mythology, Upendra Bhanja introduced, for the first time in Oriya literature, secular characters of fictional princes and princesses.

We do not find evidence of illustration of all *kavyas* written during this period and later. Many illustrated copies of *Ushabhilasha* are available, whereas one does not come across any illustrated pothis of such celebrated *kavyas* as Dinakrishna Das's *Rasakallola* or Abhimanyu Samantasimhar's *Vidagdha Chintamani*. There are virtually no illustrated manuscripts of important post-Upendra poets like Jadumani Mahapatra and Brajanath Badajena. This is all the more surprising since Jadumani himself belonged to a family of professional painters and Brajanath is known to have illustrated a *Bhagavata* manuscript himself. One also does not find any illustrated pothi of later poet Gopala Krishna whose celebrated *Champu* was modelled on *Gita Govinda*, with



Chitralekha paints Jagannath trinity in *Ushabhilasha* (OSM)

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Lalita replacing Sakhi as the go-between. It would seem that a convention had developed for illustrating only certain *kavyas* in preference to others. That is how one comes across so many illustrated versions of *Ushabhilasha* and *Lavanyavati* and not of other *kavyas*.

The story of all the *kavyas* written during this period was so unashamedly uniform that the framework of these romances has been generalised by the following sketch: 'The story opens with the description of a beauteous girl attending on Parvati or Radha (Lakshmi) in the heaven. Some prince (occasionally a Rishi) sees her and falls in love with her, who returns his love. For this Parvati or Radha curses her to take birth as woman, but on her entreaties, changes the curse to human life with the lover as husband. The girl is born as a princess and the lover as a prince. Their childhood and youth are then described. The one hears of the other and falls in love. After some manoeuvring they meet and fall more deeply in love. This generally leads to marriage (occasionally gandharva marriage). A few months are spent in happiness and then the lovers are separated by a *deus ex machina*. Each is obliged to live one year apart from the other. Several cantos then describe the grief of the lovers and their passionate outbursts as one season passes and the other arrives. By the grace of the goddess, they are reunited and henceforth live a happy life. They become king and queen, and after death are taken back to the heavens.'[1]

Shishu Shankar Das's *Ushabhilasha* (Yearning of Usha) is the story of Usha and Aniruddha which occurs in *Harivamsha* as also in the tenth *skanda* of

Usha and Aniruddha in *Ushabhilasha* (OSM)

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Bhagavata. A brief version of this story finds place in the Madhya Parva of Sarala Das's *Mahabharat* too. The story is simple:

Usha, the nubile daughter of king Banasura, dreams of a handsome man and on waking up feels desolate and starts weeping. Her friend Chitralekha draws several portraits and Usha recognises that of Aniruddha. By her magic powers, Chitralekha brings Aniruddha to Usha and the lovers secretly live together after a gandharva marriage. One day, while they are engaged in a game of chess, Banasura sees Aniruddha, attacks him and ties him up. Krishna, Aniruddha's grandfather, is informed and he comes with his army. There is a fierce battle with Banasura, whom Shiva helps. Banasura is defeated in the end and Usha and Aniruddha live happily ever after.

Upendra Bhanja's *Lavanyavati* follows the familiar pattern. As a result of misdemeanour, a couple in heaven are born into the world, the woman as Lavanyavati, the princess of Simhala and the man as Chandrabhanu, the prince of Karnata. The king of Simhala sends Lavanyavati's picture to different kings to find a husband for her. Chandrabhanu sees the picture and smitten by Lavanyavati's beauty prays to Hara-Parvati. The gods bring Chandrabhanu by magic to Lavanyavati's room where he spends a night with her and leaves in the morning. The lovers write letters to each other and eventually they get married. Their happiness has a short break as Chandrabhanu goes to war, but he returns after a year and is crowned king of Karnata and everything ends happily.

Upendra before Rama and Shiva in Sarathi Madala's *Prema Sudhanidhi* (NM)

Two pages from *Shobhavati* (NM)

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It may be noted that in the *kavyas*, the story was only a thin thread to piece together long descriptions of the beauty of the princess or the pangs of separation. There are full five cantos describing Lavanyavati, her attaining youth, her taking a bath, her walk in the garden. The circumstances of the separation of the lovers is described in one canto to be followed by five cantos of laments of the lovers during the period of separation.

The stories of Upendra's other *kavyas* *Premasudhanidhi* and *Rasalekha*, Lokanath's *Sarvangasundari* and Janardan Singh's *Shobhavati* followed the familiar pattern and described divine curses, fun and frolic of princesses with maids in attendance, the meeting of the lovers, their nights of love and periods of separation and the writing of letters and eventual reunion.

This golden age of Oriya literature was also the golden age of the art of the chitra-pothi, for many pothis were copied and illustrated during this period, thanks to the patronage from the princely courts.

Lover in *Sarvanga Sundari* (NM)

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9. CHITRA-KAVYA

In the introductory canto of his *Chitra-kavya Bandhodaya,* Upendra Bhanja gives a list of his *kavyas* and says that having written them, he set his mind to *chitra-kavita* or art-poetry. Chitra-kavya can be described as visual art-poetry in which letters of the alphabet under a particular disposition induce the shapes of lotus, chariot, tree or serpent etc. Upendra had used *Chitra-kavya* configurations in his earlier *kavyas*, but his *Chitra-kavya Bandhodaya* is a whole book of such poetry.

Only one other book of such poems is known to exist, *Chitra-kavya* of Satyavadi Das, who was a contemporary of Upendra. (OL-341 of Orissa State Museum). This book is, however, little known.

In *Vaidehisha Vilasa,* Upendra tried to make the *bandha* relevant to the text by using a design connected with the narration. For instance, *gada* (club) and *shara* (arrow) *bandhas* are used in the canto dealing with the battle between Rama and Ravana and the tree *bandha* in the context of the monkeys. The most imaginative use of *bandha* in Vaidehisha Vilasa is in the *sapta-sala* (seven *sala* trees) incident, where a snake *bandha* is used.

Sarpa Bandha in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

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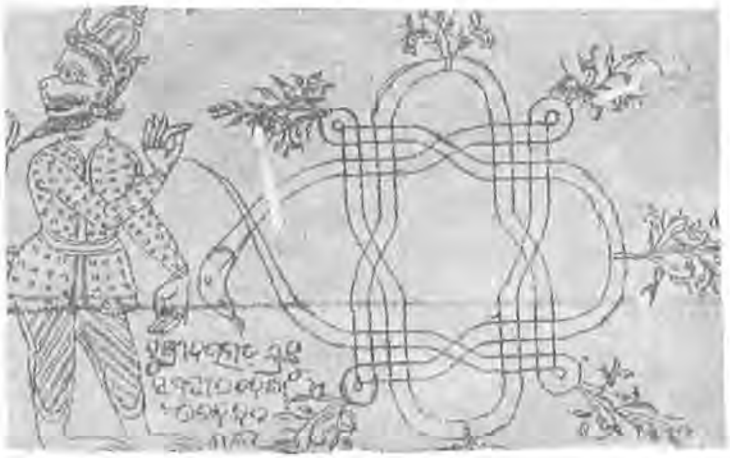
Sugriva wants Rama's help in killing his brother Vali, but is doubtful about Rama's prowess. To test his might, he asks Rama first to lift the giant Dundubhi's carcass and then to cut off seven *sala* trees with one shot of his arrow. The task is indeed complicated since a snake is coiled round the trees, which are not in a straight line. Rama first straightens the snake which brings the trees to one line and then shoots his arrow which cuts down the seven mighty trees. The following verse is written in the Naga (snake) *bandha*, which shows the snake circling the seven trees:

'The trees are large and harder than *vajra* and thickly foliated liked lotus. They lie in a zigzag manner and are held by a snake. Though shining with leaves, they are devoid of birds due to snake poison. When Rama's feet touched the snake, it straightened out of humility.'

Not so relevant is the *chakra* (wheel) *bandha* which follows, in which Sugriva's prayer to Rama is arranged. The poet tries to justify the *bandha* by adding (a little farfetchedly) that Sugriva imagined Rama as Vishnu, the holder of the *chakra*.

Chitra-kavya Bandhodaya, however, used the *bandhas* for their own sake. This book became very popular as seen from the large number of manuscript copies available. Sometimes the *bandha* designs for this book were also woven into fabrics by weavers of Orissa. In this book, Upendra uses as many as eighty five *bandha* pictures to set his poems. Some are simple bandhas like the *ashta-dala padma* (eight-petal lotus) *bandha:*



Detail of Sarpa Bandha in palm-leaf ms.

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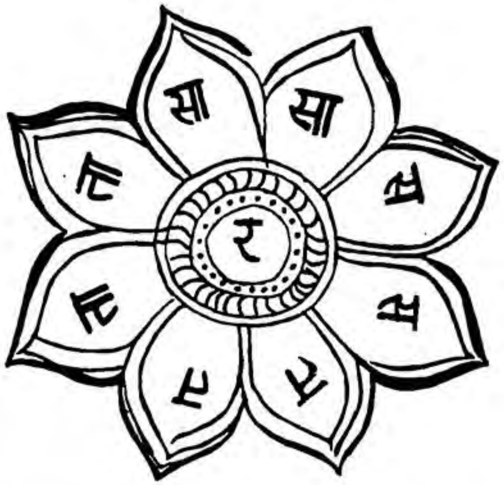
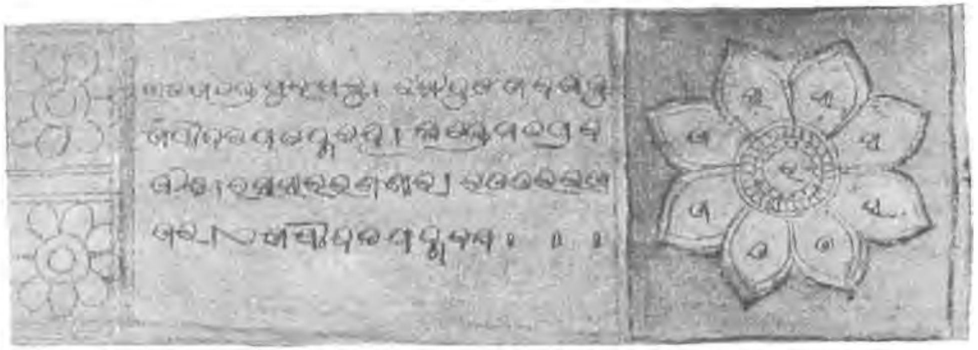


The above arrangement of letters has to be read as follows:

रसा सार रस सर
रत तर रता तार

This *bandha* uses a poem with two lines and only sixteen letters. The lotus *bandha* gets more and more complicated with *dopuri padma* (thirty-two letters), *padma-chhanda* (fortyfour letters), *maha-padma* (eighty-eight letters) and finally *avritta-padma* with fourteen lines and a hundred and twelve letters. It was a veritable challenge to the poet's ingenuity and it is no surprise that Upendra tackled the *chitra-kavya* at a later stage of his literary career, by which time he had completed most of his major works.



Ashtadala Padma in *Chitrakavya Bandhodaya* (PC)

Mahapadma Bandha in *Chitrakavya Bandhodaya* (PC)

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Most of the *Chitra-kavya Bandhodaya* manuscripts contain only the *bandha* poems. However, a few contain illustrations by the side of the *bandha* poem. The illustrations refer to the description in the text—a forlorn *nayaka* in the *ankusha* (goad) *bandha,* the sullen *nayika* being coaxed by her lover in *maharatha* (great chariot) *bandha* or the devotee praying to Vishnu in the *trasa* (ceremonial fan) *bandha.*

Ankusha and Trasa Bandha in *Chitrakavya Bandhodaya*
(OSM)

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10. RAGAMALA

Till the fifteenth century AD, when Oriya language and literature came to their own, Orissa was a land of Sanskrit scholarship. We have Oriya writers writing in Sanskrit on religion, philosophy, astronomy and astrology, medicine, grammar and philosophy. The list of Sanskrit writers from Orissa include such famous names as Vishnu Sharma of *Panchatantra* fame, Satananda, the great astronomer and Smriti writer, Murari Mishra, Vishwanath Kaviraj, Jivadeva and Acharya Godavara. Some of the texts on music, sculpture and iconography etc. have been illustrated, thereby enriching the art of Orissa too.

Orissa has had a tradition of singing and dancing in temples, and legend has it that Jayadeva's wife Padmavati was a dancing girl in the Jagannath temple. At the end of *Gita Govinda*, Jayadeva refers to his skill in music and dance. He also indicated the *raga* (melodic mode or structure with a fixed sequence of notes) with which each song of *Gita Govinda* was to be sung. *Gita Govinda* thus became a model of a poem composed to be sung to various *ragas*. Orissan temples started having a *natamandap* (hall of dance) attached to

Dhanasi in *Sangita Damodara* (OSM)

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Basanta in *Ragamala* (NM)

the sanctum sanctorum where singing and dancing could take place.

It is, therefore, no surprise that many treatises on music were written in Orissa, mostly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,including musical commentaries on *Gita Govinda*. The outstanding among these books were *Gita Prakash* by Krishnadas Badajena Mohapatra, *Sangita Kalpalata* by Haladhar Mishra, *Sangita Narayana* by Purushottama Mishra, and *Sangita Muktavali* by Harichandana.[1]

The more popular text, however, was a short treatise called *Sangita Damodara* written by Shubhankara. The text cites descriptive verses for thirty six melodies and their *dhyana* formula. That the book was very popular in Orissa can be judged from the fact that in palm-leaf manuscripts of *Gita Govinda,* under the instruction of the poet as to the *raga* with which the particular song was to be sung, scribes wrote the characteristics of that *raga* as given in *Sangita Damodara.* We also have two beautiful chitra-pothis of this book, one in the Orissa State Museum (copied by Raghunath Prusty) and the other, an incomplete one, in the National Museum. The pothis contain the Sanskrit text as also a verse translation in Oriya.[2]

In decribing the *ragas,* the text follows the visualisation of the melodies in *dhyanamurtis* or meditative images. Though in music the artistic experience is carried through sound (in painting and sculpture it is through line, form and colours), every *raga* is supposed to have its physical form and an aesthetic scheme from which a particular emotion is

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born; through this visualisation of the mental image, the sound form is said to be transformed into a pictorial form. For instance, raga *Dhanasi* has been described thus:

Delicate green her attractive body
Writing to her husband on a tablet
Tears flowing from her eyes
Washes the breasts of Dhanasi.

Bharata in his *Natyashastra,* a treatise on dance and music, had set down the symbolism of the *ragas* (sentiments) in colour. For instance, *shringara* (erotic sentiment) was expressed by dark blue and *bhayanaka* (fearful) by black colours. *Ragamala* painting took this a step further and gave visual form to the various *ragas* and *raginis* (a variation of the *raga*), by treating each *raga* or *ragini* as symbolished by a god, goddess or a beautiful man or woman. The *raga* poem usually described the person's colour and the time of the day or season when the particular *raga* is to be sung. The chitra-pothi illustrates the thirty-six *ragas* of *Sangita Damodara* and the 'extra ragas described by sage Kalankura'. The text gave a visual description of the *raga* with an illustration alongside. *Raga* Basanta is described thus:

"Basanta wears peacock feathers in his coiffure and feeds the cuckoo with mango blooms. Handsome as Ananga, the God of Love, he takes a stroll in the garden." Other *ragas* are described as follows:

"Baradi is fair completioned and is adorned with bangles in her hand and flowers in her ear. She pleases her husband by waving a fly-whisk."

"Nata has a complexion of scarlet-red, which

Nata in *Sangita Damodara* (OSM)

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Lalit in *Ragamala* (NM)

shines like gold. Sword in hand he moves in the battle-field."

"Lalit is fair complexioned, wears a garland of fresh flowers and comes out of the house in the morning fashionably dressed and dreamy-eyed."

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11. SHILPA SHASTRA

There is a large body of literature on *Shilpa Shastra* in India and the authorship of many of them is attributed to legendary and mythological Rishis and gods. They give elaborate classifications and descriptions of types of temples, towns, houses etc and are veritable store-house for the study and preservation of art-forms that have been in use since the most ancient times.[1] Many *Shilpa* texts have been found in Orissa too in palm-leaf manuscripts. Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose was the first to study these Orissan texts and bring the study of the *Shilpa Shastras* to bear directly on the analysis of extant temple architecture. His *Canons of Orissan Architecture,* published in 1932, was based on a study and analysis of seven manuscripts from Puri district. Five of the seven manuscripts are recensions of *Bhuvanapradipa,* which deals exclusively with temple architecture, while the other two manuscripts deal with the construction of thatched dwelling. *Bhuvanapradipa* lists different types of temples, gives exact proportions and height of different parts, thickness of walls etc.

A major book on the subject published in 1966 was *Shilpa Prakasha,* a mediaeval Orissan Sanskrit text on temple architecture. This was based on four palm-

Shilpa Shastra (NM)

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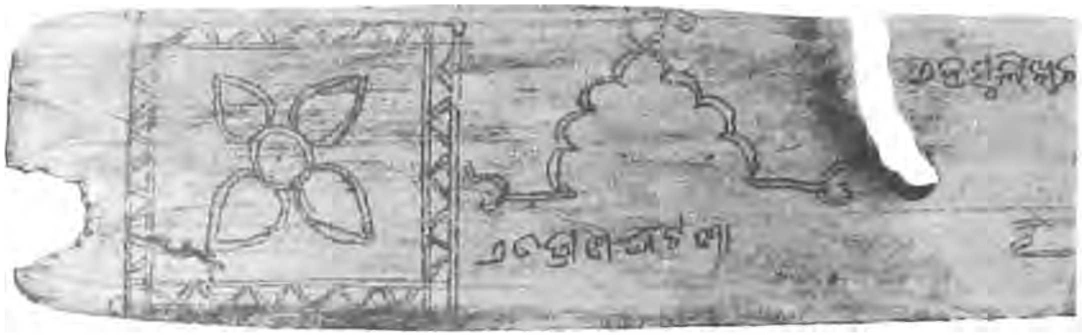
leaf manuscripts, two discovered in Orissa and two in Andhra Pradesh and three of these were exhibited at the 26th International Congress of Orientalists in New Delhi in January 1964. One of these was an illustrated manuscript giving drawings of the component parts of a particular temple-type. The author of *Shilpa Prakasha* is Ramachandra Kaulachara, an Orissan architect and he mentions as his source *Saudhikagama,* an earlier text. *Shilpa Prakasha* discusses various types of temples and gives detailed instructions for the construction of each portion of the temple.

Even today, manuscripts of *Shilpa* texts can be found in the possession of persons belonging to the painter or sculptor caste in Orissa. These give drawings of temples of the Orissan type and give measurements etc of such temples.

Another type of text found in Orissa is the *Griha-bandha Shilpa* or the science of building houses. These texts specify suitable locations for building a house, which direction it should face, at what time construction work should start and so on. Some of these texts are illustrated with simple designs of various parts of the house.

Some *Shilpa Shastras* discussed and gave illustrations of arms and armaments, tools, door frames, tiger-trap, crowns and various other household articles. One such manuscript is available in the Vishva-Bharati collection.[2]



Griha-bandha Shilpa (OSM)

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An important text, written in Sanskrit language and Oriya script is a book of *dhyana-mantras* available in an illustrated plam-leaf manuscript in the Utkal University collection. According to *Vishnudharmottaram*, divided attention (*anya-chittata*) is a picture-spoiling factor and the artist has to take resort to a *dhyana-mantra* to avoid distraction. The artist is to recite the *dhyana-mantra* which describes the deity he is drawing or modelling and this is supposed to help hi form a mental image of the deity and concentrate on his work.

The text under consideration gives a picture of the deity and describes it, and gives the *dhyana-mantra* for the same. For instance the picture of Shveta-Varaha has the following *dhyana-mantra*:

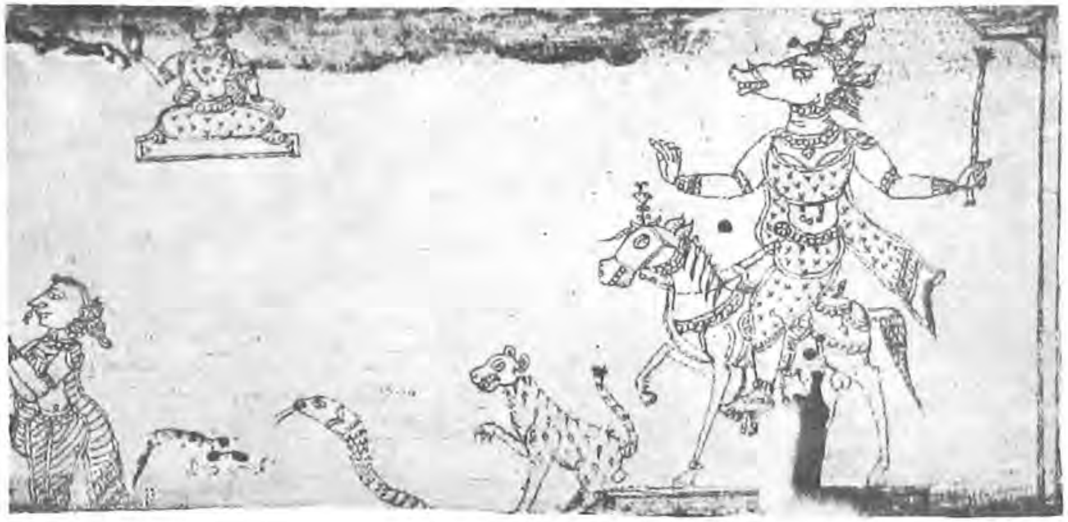
अश्वारूढ़े रक्त वर्णे स्मित सौम्य मुखाम्बुजे
राज स्त्री सर्वं जन्तुनां वशीकर गजायिनो

The caption on the picture says: Pictures of Shiveta-Varaha riding the horse, king, trader, magic-serpent and tiger.

The *dhyana* for Nava-gunjara is as follows:

वक्त्र कुक्कुट सन्निभं गलमूलं मायुरकं वार्षभम्
स्कंध पुच्छ मथोरंग नर हय व्याघ्रेन पादन्विद्धत
पश्यन्मंजुल दर्पणं हरि कटि नाना विभुषान्वित
पाया विष्णु रनामयो भुविनवक्रौंचाकृतं कामज:

The caption says: picture of Arjuna and devotee with Navagunjara.



Shveta-Varaha and Nava-gunjara in *Dhyana-mantra* (UUL)

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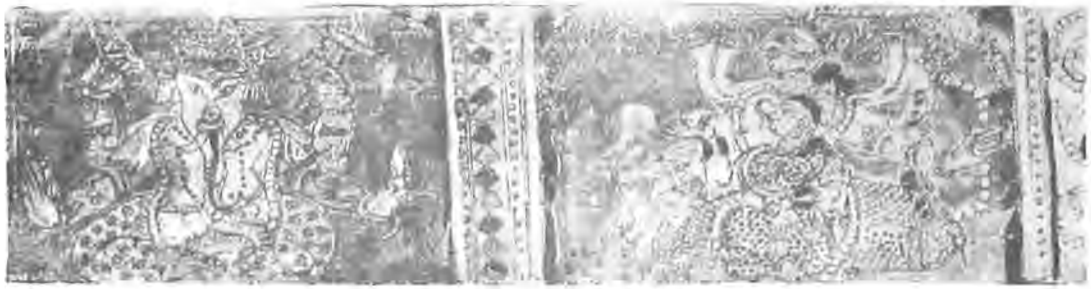

Ganesha and Kandarpa in *Chausathi Rati-Bandha* (OSM)

12. RATI-BANDHA

A text which was immensely popular with artists was Gopala Bhanja's *Chausathi Rati-Bandha* and we find a large number of chitra-pothis of this book. Not much is known about the author or his period and very often the text is attributed to the well-known Upendra Bhanja. Sometimes, the text also goes under the name *Panchashayaka*, which was the title of a text on the art of love written by Jyotirisvara Kavishekhara of the fourteenth century. The Oriya text was most probably written in the eighteenth century.

The word *chausathi* in the title *(chatuhshashti* in Sanskrit) means sixty-four, which seems to be some sort of a magic number so far as treatises on love and love-making are concerned. One of the chapters in *Kama Shastra* is called *Chatuhshashti* and Vatsyayana explains at length why it is so named. 'This part of *Kama Shastra*, which treats of sexual union is also called *Chatuhshashti*. Some old authors say that it is called so because it contains sixty-four chapters. Others are of opinion that the author of this part being a person named Panchala, and the person who recited the part of the Rig-Veda called Dashatapa, which

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contains sixty-four verses, being also called Panchala, the name sixty-four has been given to the part of the work in honour of the Rig Vedas. The followers of Babhravya say on the other hand that this part contains eight subjects...each of these subjects being of eight kinds and eight multiplied by eight being sixty-four. But Vatsyayana affirms that as this part contains....other subjects, the name sixty-four is given to it only accidentally. As, for instance, we say this tree is Saptaparna or seven-leaved, this offering of rice is Panchavarna or five-coloured, but the tree has not seven leaves, neither has the rice five colours.'[1]

This comment is specially relevant to Gopala Bhanja's book which describes more than sixty-four positions. The text starts with an invocation to Kandarpa, the god of love, and adds that one who makes love to a woman without knowing the *Kama Shastra* is a foolish animal. *Chausathi Rati-bandha* is no original work, but takes its contents from several earlier works even as Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra* was the culmination of a long tradition which, according to legend, began with Prajapati, the creator of mankind who first gave the teachings of love. The teachings were passed on by Shiva's mount Nandi who was inspired by Shiva and Parvati who were locked away making love for a thousand years.

Chausathi Rati-bandha borrows from Kalyana Malla's *Ananga Ranga*, Pandit Kokkaka's *Rati Rahasya*, Kavishekhara's *Panchashayaka* and Minanatha's *Smaradipika*. These books were written between the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries and were themselves heavily based on *Kama Sutra*. Like these texts,

Chausathi Rati-Bandha (OSM)

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Chausathi Rati-bandha deals with the classification of men and women, erogenous zones according to position of the moon, aphrodisiacs and medicines, and also describes sixty-four positions, followed by a few more positions.

Sixty-four positions (and seventy-two games of love) have been mentioned in Sarala Das's Mahabharat on several occasions, as also in subsequent Oriya *kavyas*.[2] In the chitra-pothis of *Chausathi Rati-bandha*, the only illustrations are that of sixty-four positions, besides pictures of Ganesha and Kandarpa at the beginning of the text. Most of the chitra-pothis of this text, however, have very crude illustrations, which can be explained by the fact that there was a great demand for the text and that many pothis got written and illustrated by artists who were not so good in their work.

Chausathi Rati-Bandha (OSM)

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13. YANTRA MANTRA TANTRA

Besides *kavyas* and treatises, there were many odd texts which were illustrated in palm-leaf manuscripts. A popular text was the so called *Swapna Vichara* or Book of Dreams, which described the effects of dreams on the person who had the dream. If one dreamt of the celestial dancer Rambha, it helped one to accomplish all tasks, it prevented all sorrows, and one achieved all his objectives. If one dreamt of a buffalo, on the other hand, one was afflicted with diseases and got many frights, one lost friends and one's belongings. The text was sometimes called *Prashna Chudamani* or the Crown-jewel of Questions and had the text written in Sanskrit. It was used by soothsayers to make predictions.

A similar text used by soothsayers was *Hanuman Prashna* which had pictures as also answers to possible questions. According to one book, the soothsayer asked the questioners for some numbers, added them, divided them by eight and read out the result from the same page as the result of the division and the line following the remainder. The answers were listed in the book in this manner: There will be delay getting the job. It is hoping against hopes. You will spend a lot of money. You will get land. Try and you may become free. Appear in the examination, you will certainly pass. The questioner was told one of these lines, no doubt for a fee.

Rambha in *Prashna Chudamani* (OSA)

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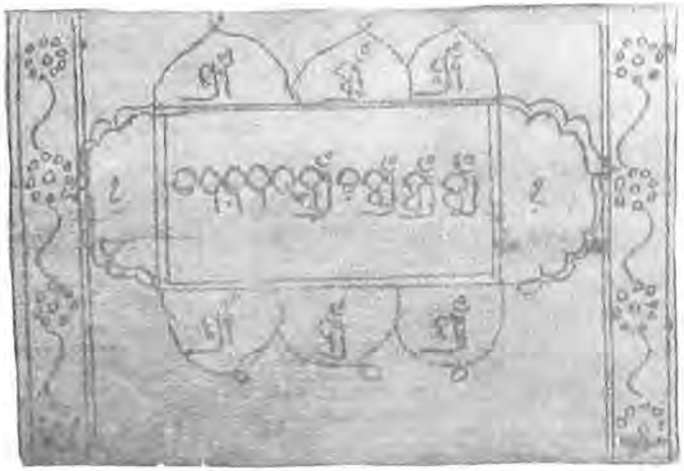

Yantra Chudamani (AS)

Guni Garedi**, a yantra text (OSM)**

There are also illustrated texts having geometrical diagrams with mystic symbols, letters and pictures, accompanied by *mantras*. The diagrams are called *Yantras* (tools) which are concrete forms of the *mantras* used for protective as well as evil purposes[1]. 'Picture-writing, accompanied by spell-making, in the poetry of local vernaculars saturates the rural tradition. *Mandala* and *Yantras* of protection are drawn, gateways opened and guardians established to guard against the entry of the malevolent.'[2] These seem to have evolved from trantric worship, with its extended use of the sensory instruments of heightened perception to seek extra-sensory experience, its involvement with symbol and diagram. This was a later degeneration with the mass application of Tantric ritual from the rarefied fields of Yoga and mutation to witchcraft, astrology and the physical rites[3].

In one of the pothis, there is a *Yantra,* a series of letters in two squares, arranged as in a crossword puzzle. The squares with the letters are to be incised on both sides of a palm-leaf and when this is tied, 'the ghost leaves forthwith' according to the text. Similarly, some *Yantras* are to be inscribed on copper and tied around the neck to exorcise ghosts or the evil Shani.

There is a text called *Yantra Chudamani* containing a number of geometrical diagrams with mystic symbols, letters and pictures which are supposed to evoke supernatural powers. Many of the *Yantras* were to be used for preparation and installation of images. Some Jyotish texts also contain similar mystic diagrams and figures.

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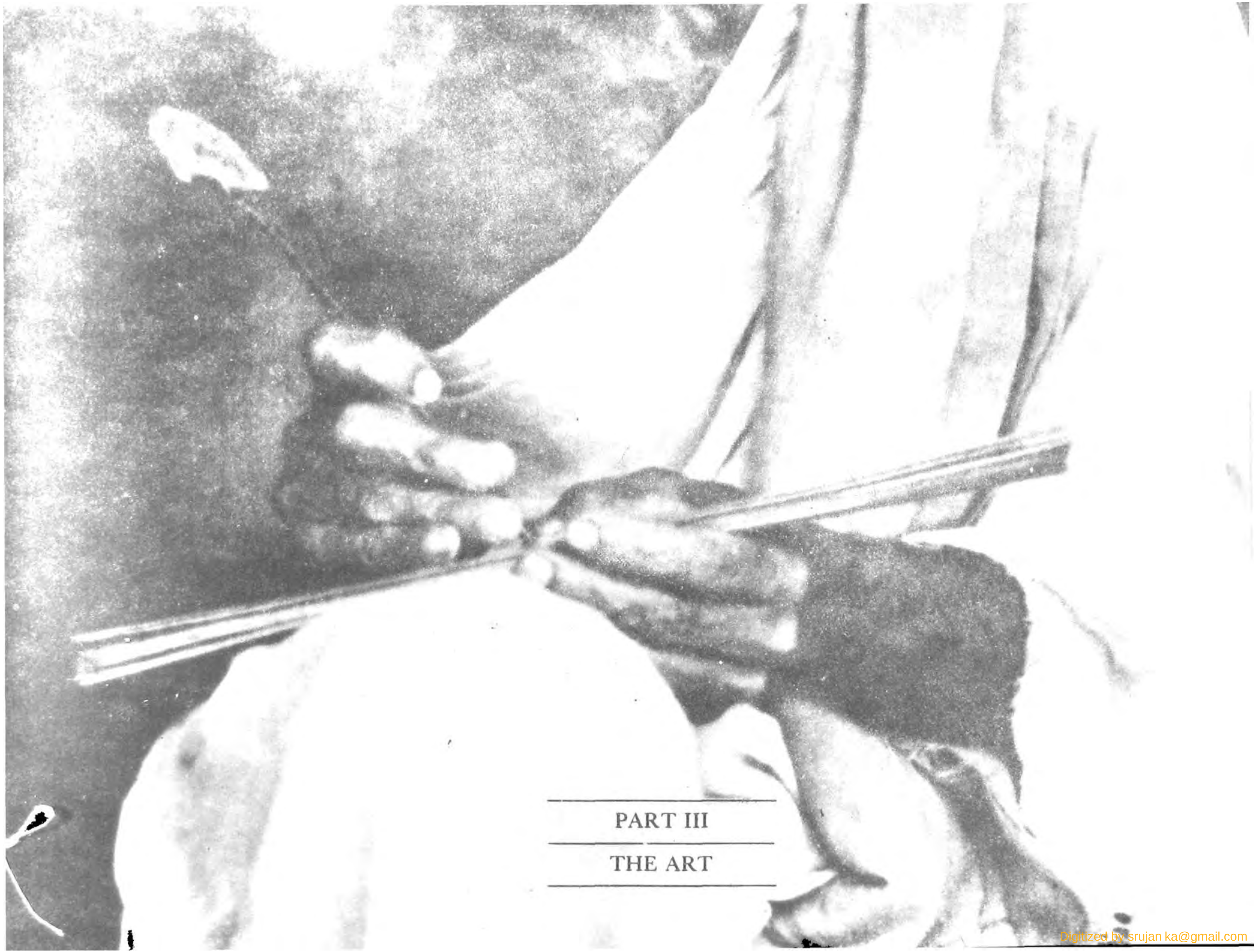

PART III

THE ART

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14. ILLUSTRATING THE TEXT

When taking up the writing and illustration of a pothi, the scribe-artist had first to decide as to how many illustrations he was going to use with the text. This no doubt depended on the nature of the text, but the purse of the future client or patron was also a factor to be taken into account. A text could be profusely illustrated, the illustrations sometimes repeated page after page; it could also have the bare minimum of illutrations to call it a chitra-pothi. An illustrated manuscript of the thirteenth *skandha* of *Bhagavata* (in the Udaypur collection) has only fifty-six illustrations and the scribe states that 'there are no other pictures besides the fifty-six". A *Mathura Mangala* manuscript (Udaypur collection) has only a dozen illustrations.

It was customary to start a chitra-pothi with a picture of Ganesha, the god of learning and well-being and the words Shri Ganeshaya Namah (salutation to Ganesha) and Shri Shubhamastu (Let it be auspicious). Some pothis also had the picture of Sarasvati, the goddess of learning on the front page. If it was the erotic text *Rati-bandha*, it invariably had a picture of Kandarpa, the god of love.

Opening scene in *Gita Govinda* (NM)

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Surpanakha and Rama in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

In many Upendra Bhanja *kavyas*, the poet is shown paying his obeissance to Rama, Vishnu and other gods. He is the only poet to be so portrayed in chitra-pothis. One of the reasons for the special treatment of Upendra could be, beside his eminence, the elaborate homage he paid in the introduction of his *kavyas* to gods and goddesses, through whose blessings he was able to write the *kavya*. In a *Vaidehisha Vilasa* pothi, Upendra is shown with folded hands before different gods. The first two verses of this *kavya* were supposed to yield three meanings, referring respectively to Vishnu, Shiva and Surya. One commentator has, however, given eight meanings by bringing out reference to other gods and goddesses like Durga, Ganesha, Rama, Brahma and Jagannath. He has further suggested that the verses should yield twelve meanings since in a chitra-pothi of *Vaidehisha Vilasa*, Upendra is shown with twelve gods and goddesses.[1]

In a well-illustrated chitra-pothi, the scribe-artist tried to give some picture on every page. To do this he had to divide the available space between text and illustration. Some times he preferred to have a whole page of text followed by an entire page of illustrations, but it was mostly half a page of illustrations and half a page of text.

The illustrations of a particular text follows a standard pattern. The first picture after Ganesha's in a *Gita Govinda* manuscript, is normally that of Nanda, Krishna and Radha, with trees and cows to suggest the setting. The pictures of the ten incarnations of Vishnu accompany the *dashavatra* verse which follows.

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Several pictures follow thereafter showing Radha, Krishna and Sakhi in various compositions and the last picture shows the union of Radha and Krishna. In some manuscripts, Krishna is shown dressing up Radha, which is the description in the last verse of *Gita Govinda*. In some *Gita Govinda* manuscripts, *ragamala* pictures are given at the beginning of a canto depicting the *raga* in which the particular song is to be sung.

In case of *kavyas* based on fictional stories with many dramatic events, the artist had greater opportunity of displaying his skill. He sometimes used the comic-book style of depicting an incident in a succession of illustrations. In a *Vaidehisha Vilasa* manuscript, the cutting off of Surpanakha's nose by Lakshman has been shown through four illlustrations on the same page of the leaf. The captions on the illustrations read as follows: (i) Reject d by Lakshman, [Surpanakha] comes and tells Rama and when she stretches her hand to kill Sita, Rama gives her a letter; (ii) Lakshman reads the letter given to Surpanakha by Rama; (iii) After reading the letter, Lakshman holds Surpanakha by the hair; and (iv) Lakshman cuts off Surpanakha's nose. A caption at the top of the page says, 'cutting off of the nose'.

Cutting off Surpanakha's nose in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

In a *Ramayana* manuscript, a letter delivered by a messenger is shown in two pictures with captions reading: (i) This is messenger, being ushered to the king; (ii) This is messenger; this is Sumanta reading the letter; this is Dasharath. In a *Vidagdha Madhava* manuscript, the picture on the left shows Krishna ho'ding Radha's hand and two Sakhis near her.

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Radha, Krishna and Sakhis in *Vidagdha Madhava* (OSM)

Sapta-sala in *Lavanyavati* (NM)

Radha and friends in *Vidagdha Madhava* (OSM)

Radha pulls herself away and the picture on the right shows Krishna talking to the Sakhis, with Radha standing away from them.

Sometimes a sequence of events is shown in the same illustration. In the *sapta-sala* incident of Ramayana, Sugriva wants to test the prowess of Rama and asks him to lift the carcass of the mighty demon Dundubhi. Rama easily lifts the carcass with his foot and kicks it away. Sugriva is still not convinced and asks Rama to cut down the seven *sala* trees with one shot of his arrow. The trees are encircled by a snake and Rama first straightens the snake which brings the *sala* trees to a line and he cuts down the trees with his arrow. He then kills Sugriva's enemy Vali when the two adversaries are locked in a combat. All these incidents have been shown in a single composition. In a *Vidagdha Madhava* manuscript, Lalita and Vishakha, friends of Radha ask her about her sadness; Radha turns round, but the friend again comfort her. The two events are portrayed in a single illustration.

Sometimes different artists handled the illustrations of the same incident differently. *Sapta-sala* story has been depicted by artists without showing the snake. Whereas some artists sought to narrate an incident in an elaborate manner through several pictures, others made do with a few. In *Ushabhilasha*, Chitralekha paints several portraits to find out from Usha who she had dreamt of the previous night. According to Shishu Shankar Das's *kavya*, she painted a picture of Jagannath and then went on to paint the three worlds. Since Usha could not find her man in

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the nether world, Chitralekha painted the gods of the celestial world—Indra, Chandra, Ravi, Varuna, Kuvera, Yama and Agni. She then painted the world of Shiva, where also Usha could not find the man of her dream. Chitralekha now painted the world of Krishna and Usha recognised Krishna's grandson Aniruddha as her man. Some illustrators of Ushabhilasha faithfully drew pictures of Jagannath and all the other gods mentioned in the text. Some chose to depict only a few gods. Yet some artists simply wrote the names of the various gods in small squares to illustrate the point.

The illustrator invariably gave a caption to each picture. The caption was sometimes borrowed verbatim from the text itself, but was often in the nature of an explanatory note describing the event or action. Each figure in the picture was identified with a note: this is the prince; this is Radha; this is Krishna and so on. Such identification was often necessary since all the faces and figures were drawn to ideal proportions and looked identical. It is interesting to note that the captions on the pictures were always in the Oriya language, even when the text was in Sanskrit.

The artist sometimes tried to illustrate descriptions like the sunrise or the sunset. If the text said that the sun rose, the artist showed the chariot of the sun-god rising behind the mountains. He sometimes tried to give a visual representation to a metaphor. In *Kripasindhu Janana*, the poet says that he looks to the Lord as the *chakora* bird looks to the moon, the *chataka* bird to the clouds and the fish to water for

Sapta-sala in *Adhyatma Ramayana* (NM)

Chitralekha paints in *Ushabhilasha* (OSM)

Ushabhilasha (UUL)

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Beggar in *Prashna Chudamani* (NPL)

Kripasindhu Janana (AS)

Mathura Mangala (AS)

life and sustenance. Raghunath Prusty has illustrated this line of the poem in his chitra-pothi with pictures of fish, birds, cloud and moon.

An interesting picture is the episode in *Mathura Mangala* where Krishna leaves for Mathura on the orders of Kamsa. His departure is announced by beat of drums on the streets of Gopa. The illustration shows a drummer and a street with figures on one side and on the other side 'house' written in rectangles representing dwellings. The caption inscribed between the two rows of 'houses' says: Krishna's departure being announced by beat of drums on the streets of Gopa.

In the course of illustrating the texts, the artist had to cover all possible subjects. In chitra-pothi illustrations, there are gods and goddesses, kings and noblemen, princesses and their maids, messengers and beggars, demons and mythical creatures. There are temples and palaces, lakes and gardens, court and country-side. There are scenes of bathing and toilet, weddings and processions and battle-scenes. The artist portrayed them all and in the hands of an inspired artist, the illustrations in a chitra-pothi became as important as the text they were illuminating.

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15. PALM-LEAF ART

Orissan miniature art can be divided into two main categories, the *pata* and the palm-leaf. *Pata* is the traditional style of Orissan painting which developed in close association with various rituals in the Jagannath temple in Puri. It flourished (and still does) as a hieratic art form, depicting only religious subjects. Painted with indigenous pigments on primed pieces of cloth, *pata* paintings depicted gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon and stories from the Indian mythology. The painters of these pictures were all from the Chitrakar caste, which belonged to the lowly *shudra* order of the society. They painted *patas* as a caste celling and supplied them to temples and monasteries for ritual use on ceremonial occasions. They also sold paintings to pilgrims as religious mementos and to patrons like princes and landlords as art objects. Painted by unlettered village craftsmen, these paintings with their bright colour scheme looked folksy but cannot perhaps be categorised as folk paintings since they followed strict and sophisticated iconographic formulae and artistic discipline which gave the paintings a Shastric or canonical character. There is, in these paintings, no

Coronation of Rama (AM)

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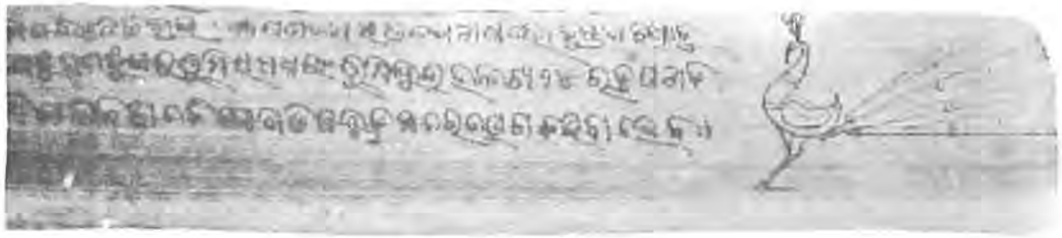
Sketch on stone, Bhubaneswar

Palm-leaf document (PC)



Document of 1707 AD (OSA)

artistic exuberance or indulgence so characteristic of folk art. The Chitrakar children learnt their craft the hard way, through rigorous training as apprentices to master craftsmen and by following the family sketch book as a manual for their craft. *Pata* is a living art form of Orissa which is still practiced by professional painters as a caste profession.

Palm-leaf art, on the other hand, developed as a secular art form. Though there are various uses of palm-leaf writing for ritual purposes, there is no ritual or religious use of illustrations on palm-leaf. Unlike the *pata* painters, palm-leaf artists came from various strata of the Orissan society and we have high-caste Brahmins to lowly oilmen as illustrators of pothis. Unlike the Chitrakars again, they were self-trained and though each artist worked independently, a distinct palm-leaf style had evolved over the years which they all followed.

It is quite possible that palm-leaf art developed simultaneously with the use of palm-leaf as writing material. The sculptors who carved the beautiful images in the temples of Orissa might have used palm-leaf to make initial sketches before transferring them onto stone. Though the bulk of palm-leaf illustrations accompanied literary texts, it is not unusual to find independent pictures unrelated to any text. These pictures are to be found on stitched leaves, not on single leaves. The scribes of palm-leaf documents sometimes tried to adorn the drab text of the legal deed with embellishments and pictures. In a land grant given in 1708 AD the palm-leaf document has the picture of a peacock. The illustration in this

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instance is rather odd since the grantor was giving the piece of land to the grantee for having killed a man, who was inimical to the former! Another embellishment frequently used on palm-leaf documents was the authentication of signatures by the picture of a lotus, wheel or even a stylus.

Gita Govinda, one of the oldest and most popular writings from Orissa, could possibly be the first text to be illuminated on palm-leaf. However, it has not been possible to date any chitra-pothi to a period earlier than the later part of the 17th century, though we have unillustrated palm-leaf illustrations of earlier periods. The availability of palm-leaf illustrations of even this antiquity is, however, quite significant considering the fact that no *pata* paintings of more than two hundred years old has been authoritatively dated so far. It is quite likely that popular Oriya texts of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries like *Mahabharat* and *Bhagavata* were being illustrated though no copies of these manuscripts have survived. Palm-leaf art appears to have reached its zenith during the age of Upendra Bhanja and continued upto the end of the nineteenth century and most of the extant chitra-pothis would clearly belong to this period.

Though *pata* was the prevalent form of Orissa when *chitra-pothi* art came to its own, the latter had to develop its own style due to the nature of the carrier used for the pictures. Palm-leaf art was basically a linear drawing without any scope for modelling either by use of colour or through lines of varying thickness. Besides, palm-leaf art may have imbibed ideas from

Gita Govinda (NM)

Amarushataka (OSM)

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Krishna Lila (RL)

other art forms like the western Indian miniatures with which Orissan illustrations are often compared. Despite many similarities which palm-leaf art of Orissa has with other art styles, it has its own individual characteristics which place it apart as a distinct style. These characteristics include drawing, linear forms of lyrical sensitiveness, typical treatment of landscape and architectural settings, and special features of the faces and the figures.[1] Stella Kramrisch referred to many of these characteristics in her article on the illustrated *Amarushataka* from Orissa:

In the *Amarushataka* manuscripts, the figures invariably have their large heads shown in profile; they are sharply turned sideways while the body is in three-quarter profile or front view; the hips and legs again in profile. This is typical also of Indian illustrations, of which examples have survived from the 12th century onwards in western India, the only difference being that in the western Indian illustrations part of the averted half of the faces (in the earlier illuminations) and in any case its large but little foreshortened eye, are outlined against the background. Here as well as there, limbs move freely within the space built up by the body and its terms. The figure has its base on a couch on which it sits or reclines, or on its own feet when standing. Neither of them are reduced to or laid into a mere line. Rounded volume is suggested by the outline whereas its contents are reduced to that of a mottled surface; this is typical of eastern and western Indian illumination. The western variety by the 17th century is swept over by Moghul currents while in the east the local

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tradition is still strong as in the *Amarushataka* manuscript. There it has its antecedents in sculpture of which it appears as a one-sided version.[2]

Palm-leaf illustrations of Orissa drew many elements from Orissan sculpture (combined profile and front view, pillared arches) as also from traditional *pata* paintings (facial features, figure composition). A characteristic feature of palm-leaf illustration is the use of scalloped arches enlosing the figures wheher in the interior or the exterior scenes. The figures are outlined against a blank ground and the pictures are 'delimited in every scene, like the space of a window or an open door, by an enclosed frame, with pillars for its sides or it is flung in curves around the opening'.[3]

The faces and figures were sought to be drawn to ideal proportions, though in the hands of a bad artist, they looked clumsy and ugly in some chitra-pothis. The men and women in the pictures generally looked alike and the characters had to be distinguished by the design on their dresses. The captions also helped for they labelled each character by name. Female figures were distinguished by the large nose-ring, which was a typical feature of palm-leaf drawings of women. In the hands of outstanding artists, the pictures became works of art rather than mere illustrations and a good artist could draw pictures of children and old persons and managed to infuse feeling and emotion in the otherwise immobile faces of the characters.

It may be mentioned that though the faces were normally drawn with a profile view as in the case of *pata* and other schools of mediaeval painting, the

Shobhavati (AS)

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Sumanta and Dasaratha in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

Banasura in *Ushabhilasha* (UUL)

palm-leaf artist, unlike the Chitrakar, sometimes tried a frontal view. The result was almost always disappointing, if not outright disastrous.

As regards outside influences, it should not be forgotten that the chitra-pothi art developed at a time when both the western and eastern palm-leaf painting styles had ceased to exist for quite sometime and Mughal painting had established itself. Orissa with its centres of pilgrimage (especially Puri) and patronage of art (through princely courts) must have attracted paintings and painters from other parts of India and the Orissan artist exposed to outside influences. In many pothi illustrations one finds characters, even mythological ones, in Mughal and Rajasthani dress. It must also be through exposure to other contemporary painting styles that palm-leaf art abandoned the tradition (as in *pata*) of portraying each figure in full visibility and not allowing one figure to encroach into the ground of another.

The artist had to work under severe limitations. The palm-leaf format was oblong and narrow. Except in the case of some *Shilpa Shastra* manuscripts where the leaves have been used vertically for the pictures, the horizontal format was invariably used by the artist because the text too was written along the length of the leaf. The stylus produced fine lines of uniform thickness. It was not possible to do an initial sketch for once a line had been drawn with a stylus, it was not possible to obliterate or modify it. Despite these constraints the artist managed to draw not only full standing human figures (a bust was done only if it was to represent a portrait or when the head was shown

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through a window), but indoor and outdoor scenes of great complexity and dexterous composition. There are well executed procession and battle scenes on single palm-leaf sheets testifying to the ingenuity of the artist.

Most art forms involve an initial sketch which can be worked over and obliterated while finishing the work. Even the sculptors did a sketch on stone before proceeding to carve out the sculpture. However, for the palm-leaf artist, even the first sketch was an incision on the leaf which could not be obliterated. He had either to abandon the leaf or make do with corrections by overwriting. In a *Vaidehisha Vilasa* manuscript, the artist made a mistake in drawing the design for a *chakra* (wheel) bandha and when he realised it, did another picture near it, allowing the defective one to remain with a caption covering part of it. In a *Kripasindhu Janana* manuscript, the artist started sketching a figure, but when he got it wrong, covered up his mistake by finishing the half-done sketch into a creeper!

Besides lines and curves, the artist used hatching, but only for embellishment and for creating designs on the dress and not for shading. The pictures were pure line work without any efforts at giving them volume through shading or colour. For drawing thicker lines, the artist had to make several closely incised lines with the stylus. When he needed a patch of black to represent hair or water, he managed with close cross-hatching. It is interesting to note that though the artist used a ruler to make straight lines, he did circles with a free hand instead of using a compass.

Chakra Bandha in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

Ushabhilasha (UUL)

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Kripasindhu Janana (AS)

Painted pictures in *Vaishnavamritam* (PC)

(The compass has been used to draw circles in some later pothis).

Though palm-leaf art normally meant inked etchings, colour was sometimes used in the illustrations. In some chitra-pothis a flat colour, usually red, has been applied as a ground on the unsketched areas of the illustrated portion of the leaf, as in a traditional Orissan *pata* painting. One comes across such colouring in Rama Krishna Das's manuscripts. A coloured line was sometimes drawn along the incised line to reinforce and highlight it, as in many Sarathi Madala Patnaik manuscripts. In some other cases, colour (yellow, blue, red) has been used on the face and body and on dress and ornaments. However, such use of colour has tended to blur and obliterate the lines, thereby making the pictures look weak and unfinished. Application of colour on palm-leaf etchings thus followed a technique quite different from *pata*, in which fine black line work was done after colour had been applied to the body, dress, ornaments etc. in the painting. In many instances, the colour work on the palm-leaf was done at a much later date than the original incision. The painted palm-leaf can be treated as an aberration and it is only in a rare case that application of colour has added to the beauty of the original incised picture.

Palm-leaf art had developed as a complement to palm-leaf manuscript writing and it withered when printing presses replaced the scribe. Oriya literature, which sustained the writing of pothis, entered a new age towards the later part of the nineteenth century. Ornate poetry of Upendra and his followers had given

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way to 'modern' lyrical poetry, inspired by English literature. Oriya society was also undergoing a transformation with the growth of communication and education facilities. There was a new generation which preferred to read modern literature from printed books rather than struggle over *kavya* poetry from palm-leaf manuscripts. The last of the pothis (including illustrated ones) were done during the early years of this century. The only text which continued to be written and illustrated on palm-leaf beyond this period was the *Chausathi Rati-Bandha*. These chitra-pothis were done in large numbers with poor and banal workmanship and were pale reminders of the golden age of *chitra-pothi* which was over. The latest datable chitra-pothi in a museum collection is a *Rati-bandha*.[4] The manuscript in the National Museum collecion was done in November 1942 for a patron. Its scribe and illustrator was Shatrughana Nayak, who now teaches palm-leaf art in the government handicrafts school in Orissa.

Sun rise in *Vaidehisha Vilasa* (PC)

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APPENDIX

FAKES & FABRICATIONS

In respect of some palm-leaf manuscripts, doubts are sometimes expressed as to the antiquity claimed for the pothi and the genuineness of the text. Dating a pothi has always posed a problem for scribes copied the old colophons including the date, thereby making it difficult to know when the copy was made. It is also not possible to date a pothi on the basis of the script, for the script changed very little over the centuries and in any case, no study has yet been made of the development of the Oriya script so as to relate a script to a particular period. As regards the text, mistakes often crept in at the time of copying and, what is worse, scribes sometimes tried to improve on the original text. This made a manuscript suspect as to its authenticity.

There have also been instances of efforts to pass off fake and fabricated material written on recent pothis as old and genuine. Interpolations have been made in texts and spurious material added to authentic texts. These have been done for various reasons and as a matter of fact, such faking and fabrication of palm-leaf manuscripts has a long history in Orissa. *Madala Panji*, the drum-shaped almanac, is one of the earliest instances of fabrication of a palm-leaf manuscript.

This chronicle preserved in the Jagannath temple in Puri has a chronological account of the kings who ruled Orissa from the Kaliyuga and the time of Yudhisthira. Parts of this palm-leaf manuscript were first published in 1932 by Prof. Arta Ballabh Mohanty, who published the complete chronicle in 1940. He was of the view that the *Panji* was written from the reign of Chogaganga (AD 1078-1150.)

Earlier writers like W.H. Hunter, Andrew Stirling and R.L. Mitra had relied heavily on the *Madala Panji* for writing the history of Orissa. (Hunter's source was a Bengali verse translation of the *Panji* done in 1844). Stirling, writing in 1825, considered the annals at least six hundred years old and considered it a correct account of Orissa's history since the 5th century A D.

With the discovery of a large number of epigraphic records relating to the history of Orissa in

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early parts of this century, scholars found the *Madala Panji* unreliable as a source of historical material. Referring to this, Fleet wrote, "with such results as those before us it is evident that everything relating to ancient times which has been written on the unsupported authority of these annals has to be expunged bodily from the pages of history."[1]

Historians are now unanimous that the *Madala Panji* was written towards the close of the 16th century or in the early 17th century, during the Mughal rule in Orissa. There is absolutely no historical basis for certain entries in the *Panji* like the reign of kings of the so-called Kesari dynasty. It has also been pointed out that the writing of the chronicle was undertaken to serve some dynastic purpose of the kings of Khurda during the Mughal period. Again in 1803, when the English conquered Orissa and disregarded the rights of Khurda kings and tried to intervene in the management of the Jagannath temple, some more chapters were added to the chronicle to safeguard the rights of the Khurda kings[2]. The Panji consequently became one of the main sources of the legitimation of the Khurda dynasty[3]. As historian K.C. Panigrahi puts it, "It thus becomes clear that if there was any original work known as the Madalapanji, it has been subjected to a continuous process of changes, modifications, interpolations and additions. With the contents of the different manuscripts remaining widely variable, it becomes difficult to determine as to which of them are genuine and which of them are later creations".[4] There is even a report of an illustrated *Madala Panji.* Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji was shown drawings of processions and stately meetings of royal personages made from illustrations in the *Madala Panji* by Pandit Sadasihva Rath, Librarian of the Emar Matha Library in Puri.[5]

Many fake and fabricated texts have since then come to notice. In 1947, a research society of Puri published a shilpa text called *Shilpa Chandrika,* which was edited by Kunja Bihari Dash. The text of the book had been copied by Sadashiv Rath Sharma from a palm-leaf manuscript purported to have been written by a sculptor who worked in the Jagannath temple during its construction in the 12th century AD. The text described the stage by stage construction of the temple from the collection of stones to the fixing of the *chakra* at the top and the carving of sculptures. The printed book gave some sketches presumably copied from the original plam-leaf manuscript.

The text was an obvious fake, for it gave a wrong date of completion of the temple and was written in a literary form which came into use in Oriya centuries later. The editor himself admitted later that he had associated himself with the fabricated manuscript due to his being a novice to research work. About the text he said that the language of the manuscript was not that of the twelfth century, that it was a piece of modern writing and that it had no relationship with historical events.[6] It was apparent from the note of the secretary of the research society that the text was meant to provide textual evidence of Orissa's artistic heritage, and this could well have been the

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chauvinistic motive behind the fabrication.

The research society published two other books: *Paika Kheda,* a manual for soldiers, supposely written in 1612 AD and *Abhinaya Chandrika,* a manual on Odissi dance, supposedly written in 1707. The palm-leaf manuscripts had been collected by Sri Sadashiv Rath Sharma and were edited by him and published in 1953 and 1967 respectively. The published *Paika Kheda* book contained some sketches. *Abhinaya Chandrika* had no sketches, but the photographs of pages from a plam-leaf manuscript published in *Marg* (Vol XIII, No. 2, March 1960) accompanying Rath Sharma's article on Manuscripts on Orissi Dance were presumably from the *Abhinaya Chandrika* manuscript.

Doubts were expressed by scholars about the authenticity of these two texts. *Paika Kheda* was questioned for its anachronic mention of modern concepts like national flag, steam vessels and drugs killing sleep and hunger.[7] About *Abhinaya Chandrika,* D.N. Patnaik had the following to say in his *Odissi Dance:* 'The book Abhinaya Chandrika published by Sadashiv Ratha Sarma (Padmasri) of Raghunandan Library, Puri contains a number of spurious verses. I dare to make such a statement as certain verses containing facts about Odissi dance appear to be modern compositions and the movements which were codified at a much later date by us (dance teachers) find mention in the text. Moreover, a number of verses of other texts have also been incorporated into it to make it voluminous. Again, Mr. Rath Sarma remarks in his article "Some Notes on manuscripts on Odissi Dance" published in the Odissi dance number of Marg (Vol XIII March 1960 number-2) that "According to this book Bharat Natyam is the basic and Shastric dance of India, Odissi is nothing but a revised version of Bharat Natyam. The manuscript describes Gotipua dance as a royal dance". But in the manuscripts which are in my possession and with Sri Kavichandra Kalicharan Patnaik there is no mention either of Bharat Natyam or of Gotipua dance. Bharat Natyam is a recent name coined for the Dasi Attam of South India. How can it find mention in a text of 15th century A.D. ? Moreover, there is not even any veil reference to these dances in his own publication. Therefore, the publication should not be taken as an authentic text of *Abhinaya Chandrika*'[8]

In the background of such fake palm-leaf materials, doubts were often expressed about the genuineness of manuscripts from Orissa. This seems to have been the case when three *Shilpa Prakasha* manuscripts were exhibited at the 26th International Congress of Orientalists in New Delhi in January 1964. However, 'there they were examined by scholars and experts and found to be genuine and there cannot be any doubt about the authenticity of this unique text.'[9] Later scholars have, however, doubted the authenticity of the text.[10]

Puri became a centre for manufacture of fake historical documents, all aiming at glorifying Orissa's achievements or for lending support to some legend or disputed historical event. K.C. Panigrahi, who has

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written at length about such spurious material. mentions the following faked palm-leaf manuscripts in this connection: (i) *Madhava Mahatmya,* a text received from Pandit Sadashiv Rath Sharma which sought to prove that poet Sarala Das belonged to the tenth century; and (ii) two manuscripts to prove that Jayadeva belonged to Orissa.[11]

In his autobiographical essays, published in 1978, Panigrahi came down heavily on fakes and fabrications. He even explained the *modus operandi* of faking palm-leaf manuscripts. One method was to collect blank palm-leaves from old manuscripts and to write fabricated texts on them. The other was to write on new leaves and make them appear old. This could be done by placing the leaves under a dung heap which made them look old and ancient. If these are to be shown to be very old, the sides are singed by holding them over fire. A third method was to hang the new leaves over the hearth. Yet another method was to immerse the new leaves in a solution of water with scrapings from green coconut and mango fruits.

In the context of fake palm-leaf manuscripts, Panigrahi also mentions *New Light on the Sum Temple of Konarka* by Alice Boner, Sadashiv Rath Sharma and R.P. Das. This book published in 1972 and *Shilpa Prakasha* (translated and annotated by Alice Boner and Sadashiv Rath Sharma) published in 1966 have raised doubts in the minds of scholars regarding the authenticity of the palm-leaf texts.[12] As a matter of fact, the editorial board of the Orissa Historical Research Journal had taken a decision in 1974 to put the two books to scrutiny by a reviewing committee consisting of four scholars to study and prepare reviews.

As regards the palm-leaf manuscripts published in *New Lights on the Sun Temple of Konarka,* Prof. K.S. Behera is of the opinion that at least two of these manuscripts, in the form available to us, are either modern compositions or copies with "various distortions and confusions", and as such their authenticity is open to doubt"[13]

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Dr. Jagannath Prasad Das is a well-known poet, playwright and short-story writer who has published a major work on Orissan art, *Puri Paintings*. His other publications in English include: *First Person*, *Love is a Season*, and *Timescapes*, collections of poems; *Before Sunset* and *The Underdog*, plays; *The Magic Deer* and *The Forbidden Street*, collections of stories.

His plays have been translated into several Indian languages and have been staged in different parts of the country, besides being adapted for radio and television. *Before Sunset* is regarded as a classic among modern Indian plays.

Born in Orissa in 1936, he lives and works in Delhi and is at present Consultant to the Festival of India.

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